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"Shall we go down now?"
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"Shall we go down now?"

Page 184

PHINEAS FINN

The Irish Member

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOLUME I.

PHILADELPHIA
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PHINEAS FINN, THE IRISH MEMBER.

CHAPTER I.

PHINEAS FINN PROPOSES TO STAND FOR LOUGHSHANE.

Dr. Finn, of Killaloe, in county Clare, was as well known in those parts,—the confines, that is, of the counties Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, and Galway,—as was the bishop himself, who lived in the same town, and was as much respected. Many said that the doctor was the richer man of the two, and the practice of his profession was extended over almost as wide a district. Indeed the bishop, whom he was privileged to attend, although a Roman Catholic, always spoke of their dioceses being conterminate. It will therefore be understood that Dr. Finn,—Malachi Finn was his full name,—had obtained a wide reputation as a country practitioner in the west of Ireland. And he was a man sufficiently well to do, though that boast made by his friends, that he was as warm a man as the bishop, had but little truth to support it. Bishops in Ireland, if they live at home, even in these days, are very warm men; and Dr. Finn had not a penny in the

world for which he had not worked hard. He had, moreover, a costly family, five daughters and one son, and, at the time of which we are speaking, no provision in the way of marriage or profession had been made for any of them. Of the one son, Phineas, the hero of the following pages, the mother and five sisters were very proud. The doctor was accustomed to say that his goose was as good as any other man's goose, as far as he could see as yet; but that he should like some very strong evidence before he allowed himself to express an opinion that the young bird partook, in any degree, of the qualities of a swan. From which it may be gathered that Dr. Finn was a man of common sense.

Phineas had come to be a swan in the estimation of his mother and sisters by reason of certain early successes at college. His father, whose religion was not of that bitter kind in which we in England are apt to suppose that all the Irish Roman Catholics indulge, had sent his son to Trinity; and there were some in the neighbourhood of Killaloe,—patients, probably, of Dr. Duggin, of Castle Connell, a learned physician who had spent a fruitless life in endeavouring to make head against Dr. Finn,—who declared that old Finn would not be sorry if his son were to turn Protestant and go in for a fellowship. Mrs. Finn was a Protestant, and the five Miss Finns were Protestants, and the doctor himself was very much given to dining out among his Protestant friends on a Friday. Our Phineas, however, did not turn Protestant up in Dublin, whatever his father's secret wishes on that subject may have been. He did join a debating society, to success in which his religion was no bar; and he there achieved a sort of distinction which was both easy and pleasant,

and which, making its way down to Killaloe, assisted in engendering those ideas as to swanhood of which maternal and sisterly minds are so sweetly susceptible. "I know half-a-dozen old windbags at the present moment," said the doctor, "who were great fellows at debating clubs when they were boys." "Phineas is not a boy any longer," said Mrs. Finn. "And windbags don't get college scholarships," said Matilda Finn, the second daughter. "But papa always snubs Phinny," said Barbara, the youngest. "I 'll snub you, if you don't take care," said the doctor, taking Barbara tenderly by the ear,—for his youngest daughter was the doctor's pet.

The doctor certainly did not snub his son, for he allowed him to go over to London when he was twenty-two years of age, in order that he might read with an English barrister. It was the doctor's wish that his son might be called to the Irish Bar, and the young man's desire that he might go to the English Bar. The doctor so far gave way, under the influence of Phineas himself, and of all the young women of the family, as to pay the usual fee to a very competent and learned gentleman in the Middle Temple, and to allow his son one hundred and fifty pounds per annum for three years. Dr. Finn, however, was still firm in his intention that his son should settle in Dublin, and take the Munster Circuit,—believing that Phineas might come to want home influences and home connections, in spite of the swanhood which was attributed to him.

Phineas eat his terms for three years, and was duly called to the Bar; but no evidence came home as to the acquirement of any considerable amount of law lore, or even as to much law study, on the part of the

young aspirant. The learned pundit at whose feet he had been sitting was not especially loud in praise of his pupil's industry, though he did say a pleasant word or two as to his pupil's intelligence. Phineas himself did not boast much of his own hard work when at home during the long vacation. No rumours of expected successes,—of expected professional successes,—reached the ears of any of the Finn family at Killaloe. But, nevertheless, there came tidings which maintained those high ideas in the maternal bosom of which mention has been made, and which were of sufficient strength to induce the doctor, in opposition to his own judgment, to consent to the continued residence of his son in London. Phineas belonged to an excellent club,—the Reform Club,—and went into very good society. He was hand and glove with the Hon. Laurence Fitzgibbon, the eldest son of Lord Claddagh. He was intimate with Barrington Erle, who had been private secretary,—one of the private secretaries,—to the great whig Prime Minister who was lately in but was now out. He had dined three or four times with that great whig nobleman, the Earl of Brentford. And he had been assured that if he stuck to the English Bar he would certainly do well. Though he might fail to succeed in court or in chambers, he would doubtless have given to him some one of those numerous appointments for which none but clever young barristers are supposed to be fitting candidates. The old doctor yielded for another year, although at the end of the second year he was called upon to pay a sum of three hundred pounds, which was then due by Phineas to creditors in London. When the doctor's male friends in and about Killaloe heard that he had

done so, they said that he was doting. Not one of the Miss Finns was as yet married; and, after all that had been said about the doctor's wealth, it was supposed that there would not be above five hundred pounds a year among them all, were he to give up his profession. But the doctor, when he paid that three hundred pounds for his son, buckled to his work again, though he had for twelve months talked of giving up the midwifery. He buckled to again, to the great disgust of Dr. Duggin, who at this time said very ill-natured things about young Phineas.

At the end of the three years Phineas was called to the Bar, and immediately received a letter from his father asking minutely as to his professional intentions. His father recommended him to settle in Dublin, and promised the one hundred and fifty pounds for three more years, on condition that this advice was followed. He did not absolutely say that the allowance would be stopped if the advice were not followed, but that was plainly to be implied. That letter came at the moment of a dissolution of Parliament. Lord de Terrier, the conservative Prime Minister, who had now been in office for the almost unprecedentedly long period of fifteen months, had found that he could not face continued majorities against him in the House of Commons, and had dissolved the House. Rumour declared that he would have much preferred to resign, and betake himself once again to the easy glories of opposition; but his party had naturally been obdurate with him, and he had resolved to appeal to the country. When Phineas received his father's letter, it had just been suggested to him at the Reform Club that he should stand for the Irish borough of Loughshane.

This proposition had taken Phineas Finn so much by surprise, that when first made to him by Barrington Erle it took his breath away. What! he stand for Parliament, twenty-four years old, with no vestige of property belonging to him, without a penny in his purse, as completely dependent on his father as he was when he first went to school at eleven years of age! And for Loughshane, a little borough in the county Galway, for which a brother of that fine old Irish peer, the Earl of Tulla, had been sitting for the last twenty years,—a fine, high-minded representative of the thorough-going Orange Protestant feeling of Ireland! And the Earl of Tulla, to whom almost all Loughshane belonged,—or at any rate the land about Loughshane,—was one of his father's staunchest friends! Loughshane is in county Galway, but the Earl of Tulla usually lived at his seat in county Clare, not more than ten miles from Killaloe, and always confided his gouty feet, and the weak nerves of the old countess, and the stomachs of all his domestics, to the care of Dr. Finn. How was it possible that Phineas should stand for Loughshane? From whence was the money to come for such a contest? It was a beautiful dream, a grand idea, lifting Phineas almost off the earth by its glory. When the proposition was first made to him in the smoking-room at the Reform Club by his friend Erle, he was aware that he blushed like a girl, and that he was unable at the moment to express himself plainly,—so great was his astonishment and so great his gratification. But before ten minutes had passed by, while Barrington Erle was still sitting over his shoulder on the club sofa, and before the blushes had altogether vanished, he had seen the im-

probability of the scheme, and had explained to his friend that the thing could not be done. But to his increased astonishment, his friend made nothing of the difficulties. Loughshane, according to Barrington Erle, was so small a place, that the expense would be very little. There were altogether no more than 307 registered electors. The inhabitants were so far removed from the world, and were so ignorant of the world's good things, that they knew nothing about bribery. The Hon. George Morris, who had sat for the last twenty years, was very unpopular. He had not been near the borough since the last election, he had hardly done more than show himself in Parliament, and had neither given a shilling in the town nor got a place under Government for a single son of Loughshane. "And he has quarrelled with his brother," said Barrington Erle. "The devil he has!" said Phineas. "I thought they always swore by each other." "It 's at each other they swear now," said Barrington; "George has asked the Earl for more money, and the Earl has cut up rusty." Then the negotiator went on to explain that the expenses of the election would be defrayed out of a certain fund collected for such purposes, that Loughshane had been chosen as a cheap place, and that Phineas Finn had been chosen as a safe and promising young man. As for qualification, if any question were raised, that should be made all right. An Irish candidate was wanted, and a Roman Catholic. So much the Loughshaners would require on their own account when instigated to dismiss from their service that thorough-going Protestant, the Hon. George Morris. Then "the party,"—by which Barrington Erle probably meant the great man in whose

service he himself had become a politician,—required that the candidate should be a safe man, one who would support "the party,"—not a cantankerous, red-hot semi-Fenian, running about to meetings at the Rotunda, and such like, with views of his own about tenant-right and the Irish Church. "But I have views of my own," said Phineas, blushing again. "Of course you have, my dear boy," said Barrington, clapping him on the back. "I should n't come to you unless you had views. But your views and ours are the same, and you 're just the lad for Galway. You might n't have such an opening again in your life, and of course you 'll stand for Loughshane." Then the conversation was over, the private secretary went away to arrange some other little matter of the kind, and Phineas Finn was left alone to consider the proposition that had been made to him.

To become a member of the British Parliament! In all those hot contests at the two debating clubs to which he had belonged, this had been the ambition which had moved him. For, after all, to what purpose of their own had those empty debates ever tended? He and three or four others who had called themselves liberals had been pitted against four or five who had called themselves conservatives, and night after night they had discussed some ponderous subject without any idea that one would ever persuade another, or that their talking would ever conduce to any action or to any result. But each of these combatants had felt,—without daring to announce a hope on the subject among themselves,—that the present arena was only a trial-ground for some possible greater amphitheatre, for some future debating club in which debates would lead

to action, and in which eloquence would have power, even though persuasion might be out of the question.

Phineas certainly had never dared to speak, even to himself, of such a hope. The labours of the Bar had to be encountered before the dawn of such a hope could come to him. And he had gradually learned to feel that his prospects at the Bar were not as yet very promising. As regarded professional work he had been idle, and how then could he have a hope?

And now this thing, which he regarded as being of all things in the world the most honourable, had come to him all at once, and was possibly within his reach! If he could believe Barrington Erle, he had only to lift up his hand, and he might be in Parliament within two months. And who was to be believed on such a subject if not Barrington Erle? This was Erle's special business, and such a man would not have come to him on such a subject had he not been in earnest, and had he not himself believed in success. There was an opening ready, an opening to this great glory,—if only it might be possible for him to fill it!

What would his father say? His father would of course oppose the plan. And if he opposed his father, his father would of course stop his income. And such an income as it was! Could it be that a man should sit in Parliament and live upon a hundred and fifty pounds a year? Since that payment of his debts he had become again embarrassed,—to a slight amount. He owed a tailor a trifle, and a bootmaker a trifle,—and something to the man who sold gloves and shirts; and yet he had done his best to keep out of debt with more than Irish pertinacity, living very closely, breakfasting upon tea and a roll, and dining frequently for

a shilling at a luncheon-house up a court near Lincoln's Inn. Where should he dine if the Loughshaners elected him to Parliament? And then he painted to himself a not untrue picture of the probable miseries of a man who begins life too high up on the ladder,—who succeeds in mounting before he has learned how to hold on when he is aloft. For our Phineas Finn was a young man not without sense,—not entirely a windbag. If he did this thing the probability was that he might become utterly a castaway, and go entirely to the dogs before he was thirty. He had heard of penniless men who had got into Parliament, and to whom had come such a fate. He was able to name to himself a man or two whose barks, carrying more sail than they could bear, had gone to pieces among early breakers in this way. But then, would it not be better to go to pieces early than never to carry any sail at all? And there was, at any rate, the chance of success. He was already a barrister, and there were so many things open to a barrister with a seat in Parliament! And as he knew of men who had been utterly ruined by such early mounting, so also did he know of others whose fortunes had been made by happy audacity when they were young. He almost thought that he could die happy if he had once taken his seat in Parliament,—if he had received one letter with those grand initials written after his name on the address. Young men in battle are called upon to lead forlorn hopes. Three fall, perhaps, to one who gets through; but the one who gets through will have the Victoria Cross to carry for the rest of his life. This was his forlorn hope; and as he had been invited to undertake the work, he would not turn from the danger. On the

following morning he again saw Barrington Erle by appointment, and then wrote the following letter to his father:—

"Reform Club, Feb., 186—.

"My dear Father,—I am afraid that the purport of this letter will startle you, but I hope that when you have finished it you will think that I am right in my decision as to what I am going to do. You are no doubt aware that the dissolution of Parliament will take place at once, and that we shall be in all the turmoil of a general election by the middle of March. I have been invited to stand for Loughshane, and have consented. The proposition has been made to me by my friend Barrington Erle, Mr. Mildmay's private secretary, and has been made on behalf of the Political Committee of the Reform Club. I need hardly say that I should not have thought of such a thing with a less thorough promise of support than this gives me, nor should I think of it now had I not been assured that none of the expense of the election would fall upon me. Of course I could not have asked you to pay for it.

"But to such a proposition, so made, I have felt that it would be cowardly to give a refusal. I cannot but regard such a selection as a great honour. I own that I am fond of politics, and have taken great delight in their study"—("Stupid young fool!" his father said to himself as he read this)—"and it has been my dream for years past to have a seat in Parliament at some future time." ("Dream! yes; I wonder whether he has ever dreamed what he is to live upon.") "The chance has now come to me much earlier than I have looked for it, but I do not think that it should on that

account be thrown away. Looking to my profession, I find that many things are open to a barrister with a seat in Parliament, and that the House need not interfere much with a man's practice." ("Not if he has got to the top of his tree," said the doctor.)

"My chief doubt arose from the fact of your old friendship with Lord Tulla, whose brother has filled the seat for I don't know how many years. But it seems that George Morris must go; or, at least, that he must be opposed by a liberal candidate. If I do not stand, some one else will, and I should think that Lord Tulla will be too much of a man to make any personal quarrel on such a subject. If he is to lose the borough, why should not I have it as well as another?

"I can fancy, my dear father, all that you will say as to my imprudence, and I quite confess that I have not a word to answer. I have told myself more than once, since last night, that I shall probably ruin myself." ("I wonder whether he has ever told himself that he will probably ruin me also," said the doctor.) "But I am prepared to ruin myself in such a cause. I have no one dependent on me; and, as long as I do nothing to disgrace my name, I may dispose of myself as I please. If you decide on stopping my allowance, I shall have no feeling of anger against you!" ("How very considerate!" said the doctor.) "And in that case I shall endeavour to support myself by my pen. I have already done a little for the magazines.

"Give my best love to my mother and sisters. If you will receive me during the time of the election, I shall see them soon. Perhaps it will be best for me to say that I have positively decided on making the at-

tempt; that is to say, if the Club Committee is as good as its promise. I have weighed the matter all round, and I regard the prize as being so great, that I am prepared to run any risk to obtain it. Indeed to me, with my views about politics, the running of such a risk is no more than a duty. I cannot keep my hand from the work now that the work has come in the way of my hand. I shall be most anxious to get a line from you in answer to this.

"Your most affectionate son,

"PHINEAS FINN."

I question whether Dr. Finn, when he read this letter, did not feel more of pride than of anger,—whether he was not rather gratified than displeased, in spite of all that his common sense told him on the subject. His wife and daughters, when they heard the news, were clearly on the side of the young man. Mrs. Finn immediately expressed an opinion that Parliament would be the making of her son, and that everybody would be sure to employ so distinguished a barrister. The girls declared that Phineas ought, at any rate, to have his chance, and almost asserted that it would be brutal in their father to stand in their brother's way. It was in vain that the doctor tried to explain that going into Parliament could not help a young barrister, whatever it might do for one thoroughly established in his profession; that Phineas, if successful at Loughshane, would at once abandon all idea of earning any income,—that the proposition, coming from so poor a man, was a monstrosity,—that such an opposition to the Morris family, coming from a son of his, would be gross ingratitude to Lord Tulla. Mrs.

Finn and the girls talked him down, and the doctor himself was almost carried away by something like vanity in regard to his son's future position.

Nevertheless he wrote a letter strongly advising Phineas to abandon the project. But he himself was aware that the letter which he wrote was not one from which any success could be expected. He advised his son, but did not command him. He made no threats as to stopping his income. He did not tell Phineas, in so many words, that he was proposing to make an ass of himself. He argued very prudently against the plan, and Phineas, when he received his father's letter, of course felt that it was tantamount to a paternal permission to proceed with the matter. On the next day he got a letter from his mother full of affection, full of pride,—not exactly telling him to stand for Loughshane by all means, for Mrs. Finn was not the woman to run openly counter to her husband in any advice given by her to their son,—but giving him every encouragement which motherly affection and motherly pride could bestow. "Of course you will come to us," she said, "if you do make up your mind to be member for Loughshane. We shall all of us be so delighted to have you!" Phineas, who had fallen into a sea of doubt after writing to his father, and who had demanded a week from Barrington Erle to consider the matter, was elated to positive certainty by the joint effect of the two letters from home. He understood it all. His mother and sisters were altogether in favour of his audacity, and even his father was not disposed to quarrel with him on the subject.

"I shall take you at your word," he said to Barrington Erle at the club that evening.

"What word?" said Erle, who had too many irons in the fire to be thinking always of Loughshane and Phineas Finn,—or who at any rate did not choose to let his anxiety on the subject be seen.

"About Loughshane."

"All right, old fellow; we shall be sure to carry you through. The Irish writs will be out on the 3rd of March, and the sooner you 're there the better."

CHAPTER II.

PHINEAS FINN IS ELECTED FOR LOUGHSHANE.

One great difficulty about the borough vanished in a very wonderful way at the first touch. Dr. Finn, who was a man stout at heart, and by no means afraid of his great friends, drove himself over to Castlemorris to tell his news to the Earl, as soon as he got a second letter from his son declaring his intention of proceeding with the business, let the results be what they might. Lord Tulla was a passionate old man, and the doctor expected that there would be a quarrel;—but he was prepared to face that. He was under no special debt of gratitude to the lord, having given as much as he had taken in the long intercourse which had existed between them;—and he agreed with his son in thinking that if there was to be a liberal candidate at Loughshane, no consideration of old pill-boxes and gallipots should deter his son Phineas from standing. Other considerations might very probably deter him, but not that. The Earl probably would be of a different opinion, and the doctor felt it to be incumbent on him to break the news to Lord Tulla.

"The devil he is!" said the Earl, when the doctor had told his story. "Then I 'll tell you what, Finn, I 'll support him."

"You support him, Lord Tulla!"

"Yes;—why should n't I support him? I suppose it 's not so bad with me in the county that my support

will rob him of his chance! I 'll tell you one thing for certain, I won't support George Morris."

"But, my lord——"

"Well; go on."

"I 've never taken much part in politics myself, as you know; but my boy Phineas is on the other side."

"I don't care a d—— for sides. What has my party done for me? Look at my cousin, Dick Morris. There 's not a clergyman in Ireland stauncher to them than he has been, and now they 've given the deanery of Kilfenora to a man that never had a father, though I condescended to ask for it for my cousin. Let them wait till I ask for anything again." Dr. Finn, who knew all about Dick Morris's debts, and who had heard of his modes of preaching, was not surprised at the decision of the conservative bestower of Irish Church patronage; but on this subject he said nothing. "And as for George," continued the Earl, "I will never lift my hand again for him. His standing for Loughshane would be quite out of the question. My own tenants would n't vote for him if I were to ask them myself. Peter Blake"—Mr. Peter Blake was the lord's agent—"told me only a week ago that it would be useless. The whole thing is gone, and for my part I wish they 'd disenfranchise the borough. I wish they 'd disenfranchise the whole country, and send us a military governor. What 's the use of such members as we send? There is n't one gentleman among ten of them. Your son is welcome for me. What support I can give him he shall have, but it is n't much. I suppose he had better come and see me."

The doctor promised that his son should ride over to Castlemorris, and then took his leave,—not specially

flattered, as he felt that were his son to be returned, the Earl would not regard him as the one gentleman among ten whom the county might send to leaven the remainder of its members,—but aware that the greatest impediment in his son's way was already removed. He certainly had not gone to Castlemorris with any idea of canvassing for his son, and yet he had canvassed for him most satisfactorily. When he got home he did not know how to speak of the matter otherwise than triumphantly to his wife and daughters. Though he desired to curse, his mouth would speak blessings. Before that evening was over the prospects of Phineas at Loughshane were spoken of with open enthusiasm before the doctor, and by the next day's post a letter was written to him by Matilda, informing him that the Earl was prepared to receive him with open arms. "Papa has been over there and managed it all," said Matilda.

"I 'm told George Morris is n't going to stand," said Barrington Erle to Phineas the night before his departure.

"His brother won't support him. His brother means to support me," said Phineas.

"That can hardly be so."

"But I tell you it is. My father has known the Earl these twenty years, and has managed it."

"I say, Finn, you 're not going to play us a trick, are you?" said Mr. Erle, with something like dismay in his voice.

"What sort of trick?"

"You 're not coming out on the other side?"

"Not if I know it," said Phineas proudly. "Let me assure you I would n't change my views in politics

either for you or for the Earl, though each of you carried seats in your breeches pockets. If I go into Parliament, I shall go there as a sound liberal,—not to support a party, but to do the best I can for the country. I tell you so, and I shall tell the Earl the same."

Barrington Erle turned away in disgust. Such language was to him simply disgusting. It fell upon his ears as false maudlin sentiment falls on the ears of the ordinary honest man of the world. Barrington Erle was a man ordinarily honest. He would not have been untrue to his mother's brother, William Mildmay, the great whig Minister of the day, for any earthly consideration. He was ready to work with wages or without wages. He was really zealous in the cause, not asking very much for himself. He had some undefined belief that it was much better for the country that Mr. Mildmay should be in power than that Lord de Terrier should be there. He was convinced that liberal politics were good for Englishmen, and that liberal politics and the Mildmay party were one and the same thing. It would be unfair to Barrington Erle to deny to him some praise for patriotism. But he hated the very name of independence in Parliament, and when he was told of any man, that that man intended to look to measures and not to men, he regarded that man as being both unstable as water and dishonest as the wind. No good could possibly come from such a one, and much evil might and probably would come. Such a politician was a Greek to Barrington Erle, from whose hands he feared to accept even the gift of a vote. Parliamentary hermits were distasteful to him, and dwellers in political caves were

regarded by him with aversion as being either knavish or impractical. With a good conservative opponent he could shake hands almost as readily as with a good whig ally; but the man who was neither flesh nor fowl was odious to him. According to his theory of parliamentary government, the House of Commons should be divided by a marked line, and every member should be required to stand on one side of it or on the other. "If not with me, at any rate be against me," he would have said to every representative of the people in the name of the great leader whom he followed. He thought that debates were good, because of the people outside,—because they served to create that public opinion which was hereafter to be used in creating some future House of Commons; but he did not think it possible that any vote should be given on a great question, either this way or that, as the result of a debate; and he was certainly assured in his own opinion that any such changing of votes would be dangerous, revolutionary, and almost unparliamentary. A member's vote,—except on some small crotchety open question thrown out for the amusement of crotchety members,—was due to the leader of that member's party. Such was Mr. Erle's idea of the English system of Parliament, and, lending semi-official assistance as he did frequently to the introduction of candidates into the House, he was naturally anxious that his candidates should be candidates after his own heart. When, therefore, Phineas Finn talked of measures and not men, Barrington Erle turned away in open disgust. But he remembered the youth and extreme rawness of the lad, and he remembered also the careers of other men.

Barrington Erle was forty, and experience had taught him something. After a few seconds, he brought himself to think mildly of the young man's vanity,—as of the vanity of a plunging colt who resents the liberty even of a touch. "By the end of the first session the thong will be cracked over his head, as he patiently assists in pulling the coach up hill, without producing from him even a flick of his tail," said Barrington Erle to an old parliamentary friend.

"If he were to come out after all on the wrong side," said the parliamentary friend.

Erle admitted that such a trick as that would be unpleasant, but he thought that old Lord Tulla was hardly equal to so clever a stratagem.

Phineas went to Ireland, and walked over the course at Loughshane. He called upon Lord Tulla, and heard that venerable nobleman talk a great deal of nonsense. To tell the truth of Phineas, I must confess that he wished to talk the nonsense himself; but the Earl would not hear him, and put him down very quickly. "We won't discuss politics, if you please, Mr. Finn; because, as I have already said, I am throwing aside all political considerations." Phineas, therefore, was not allowed to express his views on the government of the country in the Erle's sitting-room at Castlemorris. There was, however, a good time coming; and so, for the present, he allowed the Earl to ramble on about the sins of his brother George, and the want of all proper pedigree on the part of the new Dean of Kilfenora. The conference ended with an assurance on the part of Lord Tulla that if the Loughshaners chose to elect Mr. Phineas Finn he would not be in the least offended. The electors did elect Mr.

Phineas Finn,—perhaps for the reason given by one of the Dublin conservative papers, which declared that it was all the fault of the Carlton Club in not sending a proper candidate. There was a great deal said about the matter, both in London and Dublin, and the blame was supposed to fall on the joint shoulders of George Morris and his elder brother. In the meantime, our hero, Phineas Finn, had been duly elected member of Parliament for the borough of Loughshane.

The Finn family could not restrain their triumphings at Killaloe, and I do not know that it would have been natural had they done so. A gosling from such a flock does become something of a real swan by getting into Parliament. The doctor had his misgivings,—had great misgivings, fearful forebodings; but there was the young man elected, and he could not help it. He could not refuse his right hand to his son or withdraw his paternal assistance because that son had been specially honoured among the young men of his country. So he pulled out of his hoard what sufficed to pay off outstanding debts,—they were not heavy,—and undertook to allow Phineas two hundred and fifty pounds a year as long as the session should last.

There was a widow lady living at Killaloe who was named Mrs. Flood Jones, and she had a daughter. She had a son also, born to inherit the property of the late Floscabel Flood Jones, of Floodborough, as soon as that property should have disembarrassed itself; but with him, now serving with his regiment in India, we shall have no concern. Mrs. Flood Jones was living modestly at Killaloe on her widow's jointure,—Floodborough having, to tell the truth, pretty nearly fallen

into absolute ruin,—and with her one daughter, Mary. Now, on the evening before the return of Phineas Finn, Esq., M.P., to London, Mrs. and Miss Flood Jones drank tea at the doctor's house.

"It won't make a bit of change in him," Barbara Finn said to her friend Mary, up in some bedroom privacy before the tea-drinking ceremonies had altogether commenced.

"Oh, it must," said Mary.

"I tell you it won't, my dear; he is so good and so true."

"I know he is good, Barbara; and as for truth, there is no question about it, because he has never said a word to me that he might not say to any girl."

"That 's nonsense, Mary."

"He never has, then, as sure as the blessed Virgin watches over us;—only you don't believe she does."

"Never mind about the Virgin now, Mary."

"But he never has. Your brother is nothing to me, Barbara."

"Then I hope he will be before the evening is over. He was walking with you all yesterday and the day before."

"Why should n't he,—and we that have known each other all our lives? But, Barbara, pray, pray never say a word of this to any one!"

"Is it I? Would n't I cut out my tongue first?"

"I don't know why I let you talk to me in this way. There has never been anything between me and Phineas,—your brother, I mean."

"I know whom you mean very well."

"And I feel quite sure that there never will be. Why should there? He 'll go out among great people

and be a great man; and I 've already found out that there 's a certain Lady Laura Standish whom he admires very much."

"Lady Laura Fiddlestick!"

"A man in Parliament, you know, may look up to anybody," said Miss Mary Flood Jones.

"I want Phin to look up to you, my dear."

"That would n't be looking up. Placed as he is now, that would be looking down; and he is so proud that he 'll never do that. But come down, dear, else they 'll wonder where we are."

Mary Flood Jones was a little girl about twenty years of age, with the softest hair in the world, of a colour varying between brown and auburn,—for sometimes you would swear it was the one and sometimes the other; and she was as pretty as ever she could be. She was one of those girls, so common in Ireland, whom men, with tastes that way given, feel inclined to take up and devour on the spur of the moment; and when she liked her lion, she had a look about her which seemed to ask to be devoured. There are girls so cold-looking,—pretty girls, too, ladylike, discreet, and armed with all accomplishments,—whom to attack seems to require the same sort of courage, and the same sort of preparation, as a journey in quest of the northwest passage. One thinks of a pedestal near the Athenæum as the most appropriate and most honourable reward of such courage. But, again, there are other girls to abstain from attacking whom is, to a man of any warmth of temperament, quite impossible. They are like water when one is athirst, like plovers' eggs in March, like cigars when one is out in the autumn. No one ever dreams of denying himself

when such temptation comes in the way. It often happens, however, that in spite of appearances, the water will not come from the well, nor the egg from its shell, nor will the cigar allow itself to be lit. A girl of such appearance, so charming, was Mary Flood Jones of Killaloe, and our hero Phineas was not allowed to thirst in vain for a drop from the cool spring.

When the girls went down into the drawing-room Mary was careful to go to a part of the room quite remote from Phineas, so as to seat herself between Mrs. Finn and Dr. Finn's young partner, Mr. Elias Bodkin, from Ballinasloe. But Mrs. Finn and the Miss Finns and all Killaloe knew that Mary had no love for Mr. Bodkin, and when Mr. Bodkin handed her the hot cake she hardly so much as smiled at him. But in two minutes Phineas was behind her chair, and then she smiled; and in five minutes more she had got herself so twisted round that she was sitting in a corner with Phineas and his sister Barbara; and in two more minutes Barbara had returned to Mr. Elias Bodkin, so that Phineas and Mary were uninterrupted. They manage these things very quickly and very cleverly in Killaloe.

"I shall be off to-morrow morning by the early train," said Phineas.

"So soon;—and when will you have to begin,—in Parliament, I mean?"

"I shall have to take my seat on Friday. I 'm going back just in time."

"But when shall we hear of your saying something?"

"Never, probably. Not one in ten who go into Parliament ever do say anything."

"But you will; won't you? I hope you will. I do

so hope you will distinguish yourself;—because of your sister, and for the sake of the town, you know."

"And is that all, Mary?"

"Is n't that enough?"

"You don't care a bit about myself, then?"

"You know that I do. Have n't we been friends ever since we were children? Of course it will be a great pride to me that a person whom I have known so intimately should come to be talked about as a great man."

"I shall never be talked about as a great man."

"You 're a great man to me already, being in Parliament. Only think;—I never saw a member of Parliament in my life before."

"You 've seen the bishop scores of times."

"Is he in Parliament? Ah, but not like you. He could n't come to be a Cabinet Minister, and one never reads anything about him in the newspapers. I shall expect to see your name very often, and I shall always look for it. 'Mr. Phineas Finn paired off with Mr. Mildmay.' What is the meaning of pairing off?"

"I 'll explain it all to you when I come back, after learning my lesson."

"Mind you do come back. But I don't suppose you ever will. You will be going somewhere to see Lady Laura Standish when you are not wanted in Parliament."

"Lady Laura Standish!"

"And why should n't you? Of course, with your prospects, you should go as much as possible among people of that sort. Is Lady Laura very pretty?"

"She 's about six feet high."

"Nonsense. I don't believe that."

"She would look as though she were, standing by you."

"Because I am so insignificant and small."

"Because your figure is perfect, and because she is straggling. She is as unlike you as possible in everything. She has thick lumpy red hair, while yours is all silk and softness. She has large hands and feet, and——"

"Why, Phineas, you are making her out to be an ogress, and yet I know that you admire her."

"So I do, because she possesses such an appearance of power. And after all, in spite of the lumpy hair, and in spite of large hands and straggling figure, she is handsome. One can't tell what it is. One can see that she is quite contented with herself, and intends to make others contented with her. And so she does."

"I see you are in love with her, Phineas."

"No; not in love,—not with her at least. Of all men in the world, I suppose that I am the last that has a right to be in love. I dare say I shall marry some day."

"I 'm sure I hope you will."

"But not till I 'm forty or perhaps fifty years old. If I was not fool enough to have what men call a high ambition I might venture to be in love now."

"I 'm sure I 'm very glad that you 've got a high ambition. It is what every man ought to have; and I 've no doubt that we shall hear of your marriage soon,—very soon. And then,—if she can help you in your ambition, we—shall—all—be so—glad."

Phineas did not say a word further then. Perhaps some commotion among the party broke up the little private conversation in the corner. And he was not alone with Mary again till there came a moment for him to put her cloak over her shoulders in the back parlour, while Mrs. Flood Jones was finishing some important narrative to his mother. It was Barbara, I think, who stood in some doorway, and prevented people from passing, and so gave him the opportunity which he abused.

"Mary," said he, taking her in his arms, without a single word of love-making beyond what the reader has heard,—"one kiss before we part."

"No, Phineas, no!" But the kiss had been taken and given before she had even answered him. "Oh, Phineas, you should n't!"

"I should. Why should n't I? And, Mary, I will have one morsel of your hair."

"You shall not; indeed you shall not!" But the scissors were at hand, and the ringlet was cut and in his pocket before she was ready with her resistance. There was nothing further;—not a word more, and Mary went away with her veil down, under her mother's wing, weeping sweet silent tears which no one saw.

"You do love her; don't you, Phineas?" asked Barbara.

"Bother! Do you go to bed, and don't trouble yourself about such trifles. But mind you 're up, old girl, to see me off in the morning."

Everybody was up to see him off in the morning, to give him coffee and good advice, and kisses, and to throw all manner of old shoes after him as he started on his great expedition to Parliament. His father

"Oh, Phineas, you shouldn't!"

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gave him an extra twenty-pound note, and begged him for God's sake to be careful about his money. His mother told him always to have an orange in his pocket when he intended to speak longer than usual. And Barbara in a last whisper begged him never to forget dear Mary Flood Jones.

CHAPTER III.

PHINEAS FINN TAKES HIS SEAT.

PHINEAS had many serious, almost solemn thoughts on his journey towards London. I am sorry I must assure my female readers that very few of them had reference to Mary Flood Jones. He had, however, very carefully packed up the tress, and could bring that out for proper acts of erotic worship at seasons in which his mind might be less engaged with affairs of state than it was at present. Would he make a failure of this great matter which he had taken in hand? He could not but tell himself that the chances were twenty to one against him. Now that he looked nearer at it all, the difficulties loomed larger than ever, and the rewards seemed to be less, more difficult of approach, and more evanescent. How many members were there who could never get a hearing! How many who only spoke to fail! How many, who spoke well, who could speak to no effect as far as their own worldly prospects were concerned! He had already known many members of Parliament to whom no outward respect or sign of honour was ever given by any one; and it seemed to him, as he thought over it, that Irish members of Parliament were generally treated with more indifference than any others. There were O'B—— and O'C—— and O'D——, for whom no one cared a straw, who could hardly get men to dine

with them at the club, and yet they were genuine members of Parliament. Why should he ever be better than O'B——, or O'C——, or O'D——? And in what way should he begin to be better? He had an idea of the fashion after which it would be his duty to strive that he might excel those gentlemen. He did not give any of them credit for much earnestness in their country's behalf, and he was minded to be very earnest. He would go to his work honestly and conscientiously, determined to do his duty as best he might, let the results to himself be what they would. This was a noble resolution, and might have been pleasant to him,—had he not remembered that smile of derision which had come over his friend Erle's face when he declared his intention of doing his duty to his country as a liberal, and not of supporting a party. O'B—— and O'C—— and O'D—— were keen enough to support their party, only they were sometimes a little astray at knowing which was their party for the nonce. He knew that Erle and such men would despise him if he did not fall into the regular groove,—and if the Barrington Erles despised him, what would then be left for him?

His moody thoughts were somewhat dissipated when he found one Laurence Fitzgibbon,—the Honourable Laurence Fitzgibbon,—a special friend of his own, and a very clever fellow, on board the boat as it steamed out of Kingston harbour. Laurence Fitzgibbon had also just been over about his election, and had been returned as a matter of course for his father's county. Laurence Fitzgibbon had sat in the House for the last fifteen years, and was yet well-nigh as young a man as any in it. And he was a man alto-

gether different from the O'B——s, O'C——s, and O'D——s. Laurence Fitzgibbon could always get the ear of the House if he chose to speak, and his friends declared that he might have been high up in office long since if he would have taken the trouble to work. He was a welcome guest at the houses of the very best people, and was a friend of whom any one might be proud. It had for two years been a feather in the cap of Phineas that he knew Laurence Fitzgibbon. And yet people said that Laurence Fitzgibbon had nothing of his own, and men wondered how he lived. He was the youngest son of Lord Claddagh, an Irish peer with a large family, who could do nothing for Laurence, his favourite child, beyond finding him a seat in Parliament.

"Well, Finn, my boy," said Laurence, shaking hands with the young member on board the steamer, "so you 've made it all right at Loughshane." Then Phineas was beginning to tell all the story, the wonderful story, of George Morris and the Earl of Tulla,—how the men of Loughshane had elected him without opposition; how he had been supported by conservatives as well as liberals;—how unanimous Loughshane had been in electing him, Phineas Finn, as its representative. But Mr. Fitzgibbon seemed to care very little about all this, and went so far as to declare that those things were accidents which fell out sometimes one way and sometimes another, and were altogether independent of any merit or demerit on the part of the candidate himself. And it was marvellous and almost painful to Phineas that his friend Fitzgibbon should accept the fact of his membership with so little of congratulation,—with absolutely no blowing of trumpets

whatever. Had he been elected a member of the municipal corporation of Loughshane, instead of its representative in the British Parliament, Laurence Fitzgibbon could not have made less fuss about it. Phineas was disappointed, but he took the cue from his friend too quickly to show his disappointment. And when, half an hour after their meeting, Fitzgibbon had to be reminded that his companion was not in the House during the last session, Phineas was able to make the remark as though he thought as little about the House as did the old-accustomed member himself.

"As far as I can see as yet," said Fitzgibbon, "we are sure to have seventeen."

"Seventeen?" said Phineas, not quite understanding the meaning of the number quoted.

"A majority of seventeen. There are four Irish counties and three Scotch which have n't returned as yet; but we know pretty well what they 'll do. There 's a doubt about Tipperary, of course; but whichever gets in of the seven who are standing, it will be a vote on our side. Now the Government can't live against that. The uphill strain is too much for them."

"According to my idea, nothing can justify them in trying to live against a majority."

"That 's gammon. When the thing is so equal, anything is fair. But you see they don't like it. Of course there are some among them as hungry as we are; and Dubby would give his toes and fingers to remain in." Dubby was the ordinary name by which, among friends and foes, Mr. Daubeny was known: Mr. Daubeny, who at that time was the leader of the conservative party in the House of Commons. "But most of them," continued Mr. Fitzgibbon, "prefer the

other game, and if you don't care about money, upon my word it 's the pleasanter game of the two."

"But the country gets nothing done by a tory Government."

"As to that, it 's six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. I never knew a Government yet that wanted to do anything. Give a Government a real strong majority, as the tories used to have half a century since, and as a matter of course it will do nothing. Why should it? Doing things, as you call it, is only bidding for power,—for patronage and pay."

"And is the country to have no service done?"

"The country gets quite as much service as it pays for,—and perhaps a little more. The clerks in the offices work for the country. And the Ministers work too, if they 've got anything to manage. There is plenty of work done;—but of work in Parliament, the less the better, according to my ideas. It 's very little that ever is done, and that little is generally too much."

"But the people——"

"Come down and have a glass of brandy and water, and leave the people alone for the present. The people can take care of themselves a great deal better than we can take care of them." Mr. Fitzgibbon's doctrine as to the commonwealth was very different from that of Barrington Erle, and was still less to the taste of the new member. Barrington Erle considered that his leader, Mr. Mildmay, should be intrusted to make all necessary changes in the laws, and that an obedient House of Commons should implicitly obey that leader in authorising all changes proposed by him;—but according to Barrington Erle, such changes should be

numerous and of great importance, and would, if duly passed into law at his lord's behest, gradually produce such a whig Utopia in England as has never yet been seen on the face of the earth. Now, according to Mr. Fitzgibbon, the present Utopia would be good enough,—if only he himself might be once more put into possession of a certain semi-political place about the Court, from which he had heretofore drawn £1,000 per annum, without any work, much to his comfort. He made no secret of his ambition, and was chagrined simply at the prospect of having to return to his electors before he could enjoy those good things which he expected to receive from the undoubted majority of seventeen, which had been, or would be, achieved.

"I hate all change as a rule," said Fitzgibbon; "but, upon my word, we ought to alter that. When a fellow has got a crumb of comfort, after waiting for it years and years, and perhaps spending thousands in elections, he has to go back and try his hand again at the last moment, merely in obedience to some antiquated prejudice. Look at poor Jack Bond,—the best friend I ever had in the world. He was wrecked upon that rock forever. He spent every shilling he had in contesting Romford three times running,—and three times running he got in. Then they made him Vice-Comptroller of the Granaries, and I 'm shot if he did n't get spilt at Romford on standing for his re-election!"

"And what became of him?"

"God knows. I think I heard that he married an old woman and settled down somewhere. I know he never came up again. Now, I call that a confounded

shame. I suppose I 'm safe down in Mayo, but there 's no knowing what may happen in these days."

As they parted at Euston Square, Phineas asked his friend some little nervous question as to the best mode of making a first entrance into the House. Would Laurence Fitzgibbon see him through the difficulties of the oath-taking? But Laurence Fitzgibbon made very little of the difficulty. "Oh;—you just come down, and there 'll be a rush of fellows, and you 'll know everybody. You 'll have to hang about for an hour or so, and then you 'll get pushed through. There is n't time for much ceremony after a general election."

Phineas reached London early in the morning, and went home to bed for an hour or so. The House was to meet on that very day, and he intended to begin his parliamentary duties at once if he should find it possible to get some one to accompany him. He felt that he should lack courage to go down to Westminster Hall all alone, and explain to the policeman and doorkeepers that he was the man who had just been elected member for Loughshane. So about noon he went into the Reform Club, and there he found a great crowd of men, among whom there was a plentiful sprinkling of members. Erle saw him in a moment, and came to him with congratulations.

"So you 're all right, Finn," said he.

"Yes; I 'm all right,—I did n't have much doubt about it when I went over."

"I never heard of a fellow with such a run of luck," said Erle. "It 's just one of those flukes that occur once in a dozen elections. Any one on earth might have got in without spending a shilling."

Phineas did n't at all like this. "I don't think any

one could have got in," said he, "without knowing Lord Tulla."

"Lord Tulla was nowhere, my dear boy, and could have nothing to say to it. But never mind that. You meet me in the lobby at two. There 'll be a lot of us there, and we 'll go in together. Have you seen Fitzgibbon?" Then Barrington Erle went off to other business, and Finn was congratulated by other men. But it seemed to him that the congratulations of his friends were not hearty. He spoke to some men, of whom he thought that he knew they would have given their eyes to be in Parliament;—and yet they spoke of his success as being a very ordinary thing. "Well, my boy, I hope you like it," said one middle-aged gentleman whom he had known ever since he came up to London. "The difference is between working for nothing and working for money. You 'll have to work for nothing now."

"That 's about it, I suppose," said Phineas.

"They say the House is a comfortable club," said the middle-aged friend, "but I confess that I should n't like being rung away from my dinner myself."

At two punctually Phineas was in the lobby at Westminster, and then he found himself taken into the House with a crowd of other men. The old and young, and they who were neither old nor young, were mingled together, and there seemed to be very little respect of persons. On three or four occasions there was some cheering when a popular man or a great leader came in: but the work of the day left but little clear impression on the mind of the young member. He was confused, half elated, half disappointed, and had not his wits about him. He found himself con-

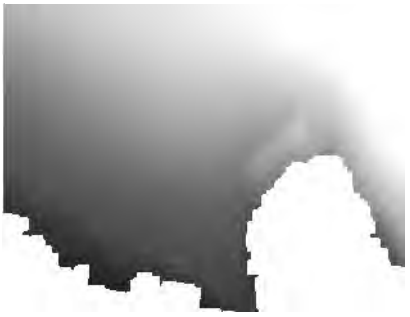
stantly regretting that he was there; and as constantly telling himself that he, hardly yet twenty-five, without a shilling of his own, had achieved an entrance into that assembly which by the consent of all men is the greatest in the world, and which many of the rich magnates of the country had in vain spent heaps of treasure in their endeavours to open to their own footsteps. He tried hard to realise what he had gained, but the dust and the noise and the crowds and the want of something august to the eye were almost too strong for him. He managed, however, to take the oath early among those who took it, and heard the Queen's Speech read and the Address moved and seconded. He was seated very uncomfortably, high up on a back seat, between two men whom he did not know; and he found the speeches to be very long. He had been in the habit of seeing such speeches reported in about a column, and he thought that these speeches must take at least four columns each. He sat out the debate on the Address till the House was adjourned, and then he went away to dine at his club. He did go into the dining-room of the House, but there was a crowd there, and he found himself alone,—and to tell the truth, he was afraid to order his dinner.

The nearest approach to a triumph which he had in London came to him from the glory which his election reflected upon his landlady. She was a kindly, good, motherly soul, whose husband was a journeyman law-stationer, and who kept a very decent house in Great Marlborough Street. Here Phineas had lodged since he had been in London, and was a great favourite. "God bless my soul, Mr. Phineas," said she, "only think of your being a member of Parliament!"

"Yes, I 'm a member of Parliament, Mrs. Bunce."

"And you 'll go on with the rooms the same as ever? Well, I never thought to have a member of Parliament in 'em."

Mrs. Bunce really had realised the magnitude of the step which her lodger had taken, and Phineas was grateful to her.



CHAPTER IV.

LADY LAURA STANDISH.

PHINEAS, in describing Lady Laura Standish to Mary Flood Jones at Killaloe, had not painted her in very glowing colours. Nevertheless he admired Lady Laura very much, and she was worthy of admiration. It was probably the greatest pride of our hero's life that Lady Laura Standish was his friend, and that she had instigated him to undertake the risk of parliamentary life. Lady Laura was intimate also with Barrington Erle, who was, in some distant degree, her cousin; and Phineas was not without a suspicion that his selection for Loughshane, from out of all the young liberal candidates, may have been in some degree owing to Lady Laura's influence with Barrington Erle. He was not unwilling that it should be so; for though, as he had repeatedly told himself, he was by no means in love with Lady Laura,—who was, as he imagined, somewhat older than himself,—nevertheless, he would feel gratified at accepting anything from her hands, and he felt a keen desire for some increase to those ties of friendship which bound them together. No;—he was not in love with Lady Laura Standish. He had not the remotest idea of asking her to be his wife. So he told himself, both before he went over for his election, and after his return. When he had found himself in a corner with poor little Mary Flood Jones

he had kissed her as a matter of course; but he did not think that he could, in any circumstances, be tempted to kiss Lady Laura. He supposed that he was in love with his darling little Mary,—after a fashion. Of course, it could never come to anything, because of the circumstances of his life, which were so imperious to him. He was not in love with Lady Laura, and yet he hoped that his intimacy with her might come to much. He had more than once asked himself how he would feel when somebody else came to be really in love with Lady Laura,—for she was by no means a woman to lack lovers,—when some one else should be in love with her, and be received by her as a lover; but this question he had never been able to answer. There were many questions about himself which he usually answered by telling himself that it was his fate to walk over volcanoes. "Of course, I shall be blown into atoms some fine day," he would say; "but, after all, that is better than being slowly boiled down into pulp."

The House had met on a Friday, again on the Saturday morning, and the debate on the Address had been adjourned till the Monday. On the Sunday, Phineas determined that he would see Lady Laura. She professed to be always at home on Sunday, and from three to four in the afternoon her drawing-room would probably be half full of people. There would, at any rate, be comers and goers, who would prevent anything like real conversation between himself and her. But for a few minutes before that he might probably find her alone, and he was most anxious to see whether her reception of him, as a member of Parliament, would be in any degree warmer than that of his other

friends. Hitherto he had found no such warmth since he came to London, excepting that which had glowed in the bosom of Mrs. Bunce.

Lady Laura Standish was the daughter of the Earl of Brentford, and was the only remaining lady of the Earl's family. The Countess had been long dead; and Lady Emily, the younger daughter, who had been the great beauty of her day, was now the wife of a Russian nobleman whom she had persisted in preferring to any of her English suitors, and lived at St. Petersburg. There was an aunt, old Lady Laura, who came up to town about the middle of May; but she was always in the country except for some six weeks in the season. There was a certain Lord Chiltern, the Earl's son and heir, who did indeed live at the family town house in Portman Square; but Lord Chiltern was a man of whom Lady Laura's set did not often speak, and Phineas, frequently as he had been at the house, had never seen Lord Chiltern there. He was a young nobleman of whom various accounts were given by various people; but I fear that the account most readily accepted in London attributed to him a great intimacy with the affairs at Newmarket, and a partiality for convivial pleasures. Respecting Lord Chiltern Phineas had never as yet exchanged a word with Lady Laura. With her father he was acquainted, as he had dined perhaps half-a-dozen times at the house. The point in Lord Brentford's character which had more than any other struck our hero, was the unlimited confidence which he seemed to place in his daughter. Lady Laura seemed to have perfect power of doing what she pleased. She was much more mistress of herself than if she had been the wife instead of the

daughter of the Earl of Brentford,—and she seemed to be quite as much mistress of the house.

Phineas had declared at Killaloe that Lady Laura was six feet high, that she had red hair, that her figure was straggling, and that her hands and feet were large. She was in fact about five feet seven in height, and she carried her height well. There was something of nobility in her gait, and she seemed thus to be taller than her inches. Her hair was in truth red,—of a deep thorough redness. Her brother's hair was the same; and so had been that of her father, before it had become sandy with age. Her sister's had been of a soft auburn hue, and hers had been said to be the prettiest head of hair in Europe at the time of her marriage. But in these days we have got to like red hair, and Lady Laura's was not supposed to stand in the way of her being considered a beauty. Her face was very fair, though it lacked that softness which we all love in women. Her eyes, which were large and bright, and very clear, never seemed to quail, never rose and sunk or showed themselves to be afraid of their own power. Indeed, Lady Laura Standish had nothing of fear about her. Her nose was perfectly cut, but was rather large, having the slightest possible tendency to be aquiline. Her mouth also was large, but was full of expression, and her teeth were perfect. Her complexion was very bright, but in spite of its brightness she never blushed. The shades of her complexion were set and steady. Those who knew her said that her heart was so fully under command that nothing could stir her blood to any sudden motion. As to that accusation of straggling which had been made against her, it had sprung from ill-natured observation of her

modes of sitting. She never straggled when she stood or walked; but she would lean forward when sitting, as a man does, and would use her arms in talking, and would put her hand over her face, and pass her fingers through her hair,—after the fashion of men rather than of women;—and she seemed to despise that soft quiescence of her sex in which are generally found so many charms. Her hands and feet were large,—as was her whole frame. Such was Lady Laura Standish; and Phineas Finn had been untrue to himself and to his own appreciation of the lady when he had described her in disparaging terms to Mary Flood Jones. But, though he had spoken of Lady Laura in disparaging terms, he had so spoken of her as to make Miss Flood Jones quite understand that he thought a great deal about Lady Laura.

And now, early on the Sunday, he made his way to Portman Square in order that he might learn whether there might be any sympathy for him there. Hitherto he had found none. Everything had been terribly dry and hard, and he had gathered as yet none of the fruit which he had expected that his good fortune would bear for him. It is true that he had not as yet gone among any friends, except those of his club, and men who were in the House along with him;—and at the club it might be that there were some who envied him his good fortune, and others who thought nothing of it because it had been theirs for years. Now he would try a friend who, he hoped, could sympathise; and therefore he called in Portman Square at about half-past two on the Sunday morning. Yes,—Lady Laura was in the drawing-room. The hall-porter admitted as much, but evidently seemed to think that he had

been disturbed from his dinner before his time. Phineas did not care a straw for the hall-porter. If Lady Laura were not kind to him, he would never trouble that hall-porter again. He was especially sore at this moment because a valued friend, the barrister with whom he had been reading for the last three years, had spent the best part of an hour that Sunday morning in proving to him that he had as good as ruined himself. "When I first heard it, of course I thought you had inherited a fortune," said Mr. Low. "I have inherited nothing," Phineas replied;—"not a penny; and I never shall." Then Mr. Low had opened his eyes very wide, and shaken his head very sadly, and had whistled.

"I am so glad you have come, Mr. Finn," said Lady Laura, meeting Phineas half-way across the large room.

"Thanks," said he, as he took her hand.

"I thought that perhaps you would manage to see me before any one else was here."

"Well;—to tell the truth, I have wished it; though I can hardly tell why."

"I can tell you why, Mr. Finn. But never mind;—come and sit down. I am so very glad that you have been successful;—so very glad. You know I told you that I should never think much of you if you did not at least try it."

"And therefore I did try."

"And have succeeded. Faint heart, you know, never did any good. I think it is a man's duty to make his way into the House;—that is, if he ever means to be anybody. Of course it is not every man who can get there by the time that he is five-and-twenty."

"Every friend that I have in the world says that I have ruined myself."

"No;—I don't say so," said Lady Laura.

"And you are worth all the others put together. It is such a comfort to have some one to say a cheery word to one."

"You shall hear nothing but cheery words here. Papa shall say cheery words to you that shall be better than mine, because they shall be weighted with the wisdom of age. I have heard him say twenty times that the earlier a man goes into the House the better. There is so much to learn."

"But your father was thinking of men of fortune."

"Not at all;—of younger brothers, and barristers, and of men who have their way to make, as you have. Let me see,—can you dine here on Wednesday? There will be no party, of course, but papa will want to shake hands with you; and you legislators of the Lower House are more easily reached on Wednesdays than on any other day."

"I shall be delighted," said Phineas, feeling, however, that he did not expect much sympathy from Lord Brentford.

"Mr. Kennedy dines here;—you know Mr. Kennedy, of Loughlinter; and we will ask your friend Mr. Fitzgibbon. There will be nobody else. As for catching Barrington Erle, that is out of the question at such a time as this."

"But, going back to my being ruined——" said Phineas, after a pause.

"Don't think of anything so disagreeable."

"You must not suppose that I am afraid of it. I was going to say that there are worse things than ruin,

—or, at any rate, than the chance of ruin. Supposing that I have to emigrate and skin sheep, what does it matter? I myself, being unencumbered, have myself as my own property to do what I like with. With Nelson it was Westminster Abbey or a peerage. With me it is parliamentary success or sheep-skinning."

"There shall be no sheep-skinning, Mr. Finn. I will guarantee you."

"Then I shall be safe."

At that moment the door of the room was opened, and a man entered with quick steps, came a few yards in, and then retreated, slamming the door after him. He was a man with thick short red hair, and an abundance of very red beard. And his face was red,—and, as it seemed to Phineas, his very eyes. There was something in the countenance of the man which struck him almost with dread,—something approaching to ferocity.

There was a pause a moment after the door was closed, and then Lady Laura spoke. "It was my brother Chiltern. I do not think that you have ever met him."

CHAPTER V.

MR. AND MRS. LOW.

THAT terrible apparition of the red Lord Chiltern had disturbed Phineas in the moment of his happiness as he sat listening to the kind flatteries of Lady Laura; and though Lord Chiltern had vanished as quickly as he had appeared, there had come no return of his joy. Lady Laura had said some word about her brother, and Phineas had replied that he had never chanced to see Lord Chiltern. Then there had been an awkward silence, and almost immediately other persons had come in. After greeting one or two old acquaintances, among whom an elder sister of Laurence Fitzgibbon was one, he took his leave and escaped out into the square. "Miss Fitzgibbon is going to dine with us on Wednesday," said Lady Laura. "She says she won't answer for her brother, but she will bring him if she can."

"And you 're a member of Parliament now too, they tell me," said Miss Fitzgibbon, holding up her hands. "I think everybody will be in Parliament before long. I wish I knew some man who was n't, that I might think of changing my condition."

But Phineas cared very little what Miss Fitzgibbon said to him. Everybody knew Aspasia Fitzgibbon, and all who knew her were accustomed to put up with the violence of her jokes and the bitterness of her re-

marks. She was an old maid, over forty, very plain, who, having reconciled herself to the fact that she was an old maid, chose to take advantage of such poor privileges as the position gave her. Within the last few years a considerable fortune had fallen into her hands, some twenty-five thousand pounds, which had come to her unexpectedly,—a wonderful windfall. And now she was the only one of her family who had money at command. She lived in a small house by herself, in one of the smallest streets of May Fair, and walked about sturdily by herself, and spoke her mind about everything. She was greatly devoted to her brother Laurence,—so devoted that there was nothing she would not do for him, short of lending him money.

But Phineas when he found himself out in the square thought nothing of Aspasia Fitzgibbon. He had gone to Lady Laura Standish for sympathy, and she had given it to him in full measure. She understood him and his aspirations if no one else did so on the face of the earth. She rejoiced in his triumph, and was not too hard to tell him that she looked forward to his success. And in what delightful language she had done so! "Faint heart never won fair lady." It was thus, or almost thus, that she had encouraged him. He knew well that she had in truth meant nothing more than her words seemed to signify. He did not for a moment attribute to her aught else. But might not he get another lesson from them? He had often told himself that he was not in love with Laura Standish;—but why should he not now tell himself that he was in love with her? Of course there would be difficulty. But was it not the business of his life to over-

come difficulties? Had he not already overcome one difficulty almost as great; and why should he be afraid of this other? Faint heart never won fair lady! And this fair lady,—for at this moment he was ready to swear that she was very fair,—was already half won. She could not have taken him by the hand so warmly, and looked into his face so keenly, had she not felt for him something stronger than common friendship.

He had turned down Baker Street from the Square, and was now walking towards the Regent's Park. He would go and see the beasts in the Zoological Gardens, and make up his mind as to his future mode of life in that delightful Sunday solitude. There was very much as to which it was necessary that he should make up his mind. If he resolved that he would ask Lady Laura Standish to be his wife, when should he ask her, and in what manner might he propose to her that they should live? It would hardly suit him to postpone his courtship indefinitely, knowing, as he did know, that he would be one among many suitors. He could not expect her to wait for him if he did not declare himself. And yet he could hardly ask her to come and share with him the allowance made to him by his father! Whether she had much fortune of her own, or little, or none at all, he did not in the least know. He did not know that the Earl had been distressed by his son's extravagance, and that there had been some money difficulties arising from this source.

But his great desire would be to support his own wife by his own labour. At present he was hardly in a fair way to do that, unless he could get paid for his parliamentary work. Those fortunate gentlemen who form "The Government" are so paid. Yes;—there

was the Treasury Bench open to him, and he must resolve that he would seat himself there. He would make Lady Laura understand this, and then he would ask his question. It was true that at present his political opponents had possession of the Treasury Bench; —but all governments are mortal, and conservative governments in this country are especially prone to die. It was true that he could not hold even a Treasury lordship with a poor thousand a year for his salary without having to face the electors of Loughshane again before he entered upon the enjoyment of his place;—but if he could only do something to give a grace to his name, to show that he was a rising man, the electors of Loughshane, who had once been so easy with him, would surely not be cruel to him when he showed himself a second time among them. Lord Tulla was his friend, and he had those points of law in his favour which possession bestows. And then he remembered that Lady Laura was related to almost everybody who was anybody among the high whigs. She was, he knew, second cousin to Mr. Mildmay, who for years had been the leader of the whigs, and was third cousin to Barrington Erle. The late President of the Council, the Duke of St. Bungay, and Lord Brentford had married sisters, and the St. Bungay people, and the Mildmay people, and the Brentford people had all some sort of connection with the Palliser people, of whom the heir and coming chief, Plantagenet Palliser, would certainly be Chancellor of the Exchequer in the next Government. Simply as an introduction into official life nothing could be more conducive to chances of success than a matrimonial alliance with Lady Laura. Not that he would have

thought of such a thing on that account! No;—he thought of it because he loved her; honestly because he loved her. He swore to that half-a-dozen times, for his own satisfaction. But, loving her as he did, and resolving that in spite of all difficulties she should become his wife, there could be no reason why he should not,—on her account as well as on his own,—take advantage of any circumstances that there might be in his favour.

As he wandered among the unsavoury beasts, elbowed on every side by the Sunday visitors to the garden, he made up his mind that he would first let Lady Laura understand what were his intentions with regard to his future career, and then he would ask her to join her lot to his. At every turn the chances would of course be very much against him;—ten to one against him, perhaps, on every point; but it was his lot in life to have to face such odds. Twelve months since it had been much more than ten to one against his getting into Parliament; and yet he was there. He expected to be blown into fragments,—to be sheep-skinning in Australia, or packing preserved meats on the plains of Paraguay; but when the blowing into atoms should come, he was resolved that courage to bear the ruin should not be wanting. Then he quoted a line or two of a Latin poet, and felt himself to be comfortable.

"So, here you are again, Mr. Finn," said a voice in his ear.

"Yes, Miss Fitzgibbon; here I am again."

"I fancied you members of Parliament had something else to do besides looking at wild beasts. I thought you always spent Sunday in arranging how

you might most effectually badger each other on Monday."

"We got through all that early this morning, Miss Fitzgibbon, while you were saying your prayers."

"Here is Mr. Kennedy too;—you know him, I dare say. He also is a member; but then he can afford to be idle." But it so happened that Phineas did not know Mr. Kennedy, and consequently there was some slight form of introduction.

"I believe I am to meet you at dinner on Wednesday," said Phineas,—"at Lord Brentford's."

"And me too," said Miss Fitzgibbon.

"Which will be the greatest possible addition to our pleasure," said Phineas.

Mr. Kennedy, who seemed to be afflicted with some difficulty in speaking, and whose bow to our hero had hardly done more than produce the slightest possible motion to the top of his hat, hereupon muttered something which was taken to mean an assent to the proposition as to Wednesday's dinner. Then he stood perfectly still, with his two hands fixed on the top of his umbrella, and gazed at the great monkeys' cage. But it was clear that he was not looking at any special monkey, for his eyes never wandered.

"Did you ever see such a contrast in your life?" said Miss Fitzgibbon to Phineas,—hardly in a whisper.

"Between what?" said Phineas.

"Between Mr. Kennedy and a monkey. The monkey has so much to say for himself, and is so delightfully wicked! I don't suppose that Mr. Kennedy ever did anything wrong in his life."

Mr. Kennedy was a man who had very little temptation to do anything wrong. He was possessed of

over a million and a half of money, which he was mistaken enough to suppose he had made himself; whereas it may be doubted whether he had ever earned a penny. His father and his uncle had created a business in Glasgow, and that business now belonged to him. But his father and his uncle, who had toiled through their long lives, had left behind them servants who understood the work, and the business now went on prospering almost by its own momentum. The Mr. Kennedy of the present day, the sole owner of the business, though he did occasionally go to Glasgow, certainly did nothing towards maintaining it. He had a magnificent place in Perthshire, called Loughlinter, and he sat for a Scotch group of boroughs, and he had a house in London, and a stud of horses in Leicestershire, which he rarely visited, and was unmarried. He never spoke much to any one, although he was constantly in society. He rarely did anything, although he had the means of doing everything. He had very seldom been on his legs in the House of Commons, though he had sat there for ten years. He was seen about everywhere, sometimes with one acquaintance and sometimes with another;—but it may be doubted whether he had any friend. It may be doubted whether he had ever talked enough to any man to make that man his friend. Laurence Fitzgibbon tried him for one season, and after a month or two asked for a loan of a few hundred pounds. "I never lend money to any one under any circumstances," said Mr. Kennedy, and it was the longest speech which had ever fallen from his mouth in the hearing of Laurence Fitzgibbon. But though he would not lend money, he gave a great deal,—and he would give

it for almost every object. "Mr. Robert Kennedy, M.P., Loughlinter, £105," appeared on almost every charitable list that was advertised. No one ever spoke to him as to this expenditure, nor did he ever speak to any one. Circulars came to him and the cheques were returned. The duty was a very easy one to him, and he performed it willingly. Had any amount of inquiry been necessary, it is possible that the labour would have been too much for him. Such was Mr. Robert Kennedy, as to whom Phineas had heard that he had during the last winter entertained Lord Brentford and Lady Laura, with very many other people of note, at his place in Perthshire.

"I very much prefer the monkey," said Phineas to Miss Fitzgibbon.

"I thought you would," said she. "Like to like, you know. You have both of you the same aptitude for climbing. But the monkeys never fall, they tell me."

Phineas, knowing that he could gain nothing by sparring with Miss Fitzgibbon, raised his hat and took his leave. Going out of a narrow gate he found himself again brought into contact with Mr. Kennedy. "What a crowd there is here," he said, finding himself bound to say something. Mr. Kennedy, who was behind him, answered him not a word. Then Phineas made up his mind that Mr. Kennedy was insolent with the insolence of riches, and that he would hate Mr. Kennedy.

He was engaged to dine on this Sunday with Mr. Low, the barrister, with whom he had been reading for the last three years. Mr. Low had taken a strong liking to Phineas, as had also Mrs. Low, and the tutor

had more than once told his pupil that success in his profession was certainly open to him if he would only stick to his work. Mr. Low was himself an ambitious man, looking forward to entering Parliament at some future time, when the exigencies of his life of labour might enable him to do so; but he was prudent, given to close calculation, and resolved to make the ground sure beneath his feet in every step that he took forward. When he first heard that Finn intended to stand for Loughshane he was stricken with dismay, and strongly dissuaded him. "The electors may probably reject him. That 's his only chance now," Mr. Low had said to his wife, when he found that Phineas was, as he thought, foolhardy. But the electors of Loughshane had not rejected Mr. Low's pupil, and Mr. Low was now called upon to advise what Phineas should do in his present circumstances. There is nothing to prevent the work of a Chancery barrister being done by a member of Parliament. Indeed, the most successful barristers are members of Parliament. But Phineas Finn was beginning at the wrong end, and Mr. Low knew that no good would come of it.

"Only think of your being in Parliament, Mr. Finn," said Mrs. Low.

"It is wonderful, is n't it?" said Phineas.

"It took us so much by surprise!" said Mrs. Low.

"As a rule one never hears of a barrister going into Parliament till after he 's forty."

"And I 'm only twenty-five. I do feel that I 've disgraced myself. I do, indeed, Mrs. Low."

"No;—you 've not disgraced yourself, Mr. Finn. The only question is, whether it 's prudent. I hope it will all turn out for the best, most heartily." Mrs.

Low was a very matter-of-fact lady, four or five years older than her husband, who had had a little money of her own, and was possessed of every virtue under the sun. Nevertheless she did not quite like the idea of her husband's pupil having got into Parliament. If her husband and Phineas Finn were dining anywhere together, Phineas, who had come to them quite a boy, would walk out of the room before her husband. This could hardly be right! Nevertheless she helped Phineas to the nicest bit of fish she could find, and had he been ill, would have nursed him with the greatest care.

After dinner, when Mrs. Low had gone upstairs, there came the great discussion between the tutor and the pupil, for the sake of which this little dinner had been given. When Phineas had last been with Mr. Low,—on the occasion of his showing himself at his tutor's chambers after his return from Ireland,—he had not made up his mind so thoroughly on certain points as he had done since he had seen Lady Laura. The discussion could hardly be of any avail now,—but it could not be avoided.

"Well, Phineas, and what do you mean to do?" said Mr. Low. Everybody who knew our hero, or nearly everybody, called him by his Christian name. There are men who seem to be so treated by general consent in all societies. Even Mrs. Low, who was very prosaic, and unlikely to be familiar in her mode of address, had fallen into the way of doing it before the election. But she had dropped it when the Phineas whom she used to know became a member of Parliament.

"That 's the question;—is n't it?" said Phineas.

"Of course you 'll stick to your work?"

"What;—to the Bar?"

"Yes;—to the Bar."

"I am not thinking of giving it up permanently."

"Giving it up!" said Mr. Low, raising his hands in surprise. "If you give it up, how do you intend to live? Men are not paid for being members of Parliament."

"Not exactly. But, as I said before, I am not thinking of giving it up,—permanently."

"You must n't give it up at all,—not for a day; that is, if you ever mean to do any good."

"There I think that perhaps you may be wrong, Low!"

"How can I be wrong? Did a period of idleness ever help a man in any profession? And is it not acknowledged by all who know anything about it, that continuous labour is more necessary in our profession than in any other?"

"I do not mean to be idle."

"What is it you do mean, Phineas?"

"Why simply this. Here I am in Parliament. We must take that as fact."

"I don't doubt the fact."

"And if it be a misfortune, we must make the best of it. Even you would n't advise me to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds at once."

"I would;—to-morrow. My dear fellow, though I do not like to give you pain, if you come to me I can only tell you what I think. My advice to you is to give it up to-morrow. Men would laugh at you for a few weeks, but that is better than being ruined for life."

"I can't do that," said Phineas sadly.

"Very well;—then let us go on," said Mr. Low. "If you won't give up your seat, the next best thing will be to take care that it shall interfere as little as possible with your work. I suppose you must sit upon some committees."

"My idea is this,—that I will give up one year to learning the practices of the House."

"And do nothing?"

"Nothing but that. Why, the thing is a study in itself. As for learning it in a year, that is out of the question. But I am convinced that if a man intends to be a useful member of Parliament, he should make a study of it."

"And how do you mean to live in the meantime?" Mr. Low, who was an energetic man, had assumed almost an angry tone of voice. Phineas for a while sat silent;—not that he felt himself to be without words for a reply, but that he was thinking in what fewest words he might best convey his ideas. "You have a very modest allowance from your father, on which you have never been able to keep yourself free from debt," continued Mr. Low.

"He has increased it."

"And will it satisfy you to live here, in what will turn out to be parliamentary club idleness, on the savings of his industrious life? I think you will find yourself unhappy if you do that. Phineas, my dear fellow, as far as I have as yet been able to see the world, men don't begin either very good or very bad. They have generally good aspirations with infirm purposes;—or, as we may say, strong bodies with weak legs to carry them. Then, because their legs are weak, they drift into idleness and ruin. During all this drifting they

are wretched, and when they have thoroughly drifted they are still wretched. The agony of their old disappointment still clings to them. In nine cases out of ten it is some one small unfortunate event that puts a man astray at first. He sees some woman and loses himself with her;—or he is taken to a racecourse and unluckily wins money;—or some devil in the shape of a friend lures him to tobacco and brandy. Your temptation has come in the shape of this accursed seat in Parliament." Mr. Low had never said a soft word in his life to any woman but the wife of his bosom, had never seen a racehorse, always confined himself to two glasses of port after dinner, and looked upon smoking as the darkest of all the vices.

"You have made up your mind, then, that I mean to be idle?"

"I have made up my mind that your time will be wholly unprofitable,—if you do as you say you intend to do."

"But you do not know my plan;—just listen to me." Then Mr. Low did listen, and Phineas explained his plan,—saying, of course, nothing of his love for Lady Laura, but giving Mr. Low to understand that he intended to assist in turning out the existing Government and to mount up to some seat,—a humble seat at first,—on the Treasury Bench, by the help of his exalted friends and by the use of his own gifts of eloquence. Mr. Low heard him without a word. "Of course," said Phineas, "after the first year my time will not be fully employed, unless I succeed. And if I fail totally,—for, of course, I may fail altogether——"

"It is possible," said Mr. Low.

"If you are resolved to turn yourself against me,

I must not say another word," said Phineas, with anger.

"Turn myself against you! I would turn myself any way so that I might save you from the sort of life which you are preparing for yourself. I see nothing in it that can satisfy any manly heart. Even if you are successful, what are you to become? You will be the creature of some minister, not his colleague. You are to make your way up the ladder by pretending to agree whenever agreement is demanded from you, and by voting whether you agree or do not. And what is to be your reward? Some few precarious hundreds a year, lasting just so long as a party may remain in power and you can retain a seat in Parliament! It is at the best slavery and degradation,—even if you are lucky enough to achieve the slavery."

"You yourself hope to go into Parliament and join a ministry some day," said Phineas.

Mr. Low was not quick to answer, but he did answer at last. "That is true, though I have never told you so. Indeed, it is hardly true to say that I hope it. I have my dreams, and sometimes dare to tell myself that they may possibly become waking facts. But if ever I sit on a Treasury Bench I shall sit there by special invitation, having been summoned to take a high place because of my professional success. It is but a dream after all, and I would not have you repeat what I have said to any one. I had no intention to talk about myself."

"I am sure that you will succeed," said Phineas.

"Yes;—I shall succeed. I am succeeding. I live upon what I earn, like a gentleman, and can already afford to be indifferent to work that I dislike. After

all, the other part of it,—that of which I dream,—is but an unnecessary adjunct; the gilding on the gingerbread. I am inclined to think that the cake is more wholesome without it."

Phineas did not go upstairs into Mrs. Low's drawing-room on that evening, nor did he stay very late with Mr. Low. He had heard enough of counsel to make him very unhappy,—to shake from him much of the audacity which he had acquired for himself during his morning's walk,—and to make him almost doubt whether, after all, the Chiltern Hundreds would not be for him the safest escape from his difficulties. But in that case he must never venture to see Lady Laura Standish again.

CHAPTER VI.

LORD BRENTFORD'S DINNER.

No;—in such case as that,—should he resolve upon taking the advice of his old friend Mr. Low, Phineas Finn must make up his mind never to see Lady Laura Standish again! And he was in love with Lady Laura Standish;—and, for aught he knew, Lady Laura Standish might be in love with him. As he walked home from Mr. Low's house in Bedford Square, he was by no means a triumphant man. There had been much more said between him and Mr. Low than could be laid before the reader in the last chapter. Mr. Low had urged him again and again, and had prevailed so far that Phineas, before he left the house, had promised to consider that suicidal expedient of the Chiltern Hundreds. What a by-word he would become if he were to give up Parliament, having sat there for about a week. But such immediate giving up was one of the necessities of Mr. Low's programme. According to Mr. Low's teaching, a single year passed amidst the miasma of the House of Commons would be altogether fatal to any chance of professional success. And Mr. Low had at any rate succeeded in making Phineas believe that he was right in this lesson. There was his profession, as to which Mr. Low assured him that success was within his reach; and there was Parliament on the other side, as to which he knew that the chances were all against him, in spite of his advan-

tage of a seat. That he could not combine the two, beginning with Parliament, he did believe. Which should it be? That was the question which he tried to decide as he walked home from Bedford Square to Great Marlborough Street. He could not answer the question satisfactorily, and went to bed an unhappy man.

He must at any rate go to Lord Brentford's dinner on Wednesday, and, to enable him to join in the conversation there, must attend the debates on Monday and Tuesday. The reader may perhaps be best made to understand how terrible was our hero's state of doubt by being told that for a while he thought of absenting himself from these debates, as being likely to weaken his purpose of withdrawing altogether from the House. It is not very often that so strong a fury rages between party and party at the commencement of the session that a division is taken upon the Address. It is customary for the leader of the opposition on such occasions to express his opinion in the most courteous language, that his right honourable friend, sitting opposite to him on the Treasury Bench, has been, is, and will be wrong in everything that he thinks, says, or does in public life; but that, as anything like factious opposition is never adopted on that side of the House, the Address to the Queen, in answer to that most fatuous speech which has been put into her Majesty's gracious mouth, shall be allowed to pass unquestioned. Then the leader of the House thanks his adversary for his consideration, explains to all men how happy the country ought to be that the Government has not fallen into the disgracefully incapable hands of his right honourable friend opposite; and after that the Address is

carried amidst universal serenity. But such was not the order of the day on the present occasion. Mr. Mildmay, the veteran leader of the liberal side of the House, had moved an amendment to the Address, and had urged upon the House, in very strong language, the expediency of showing, at the very commencement of the session, that the country had returned to Parliament a strong majority determined not to put up with conservative inactivity. "I conceive it to be my duty," Mr. Mildmay had said, "at once to assume that the country is unwilling that the right honourable gentlemen opposite should keep their seats on the bench upon which they sit, and in the performance of that duty I am called upon to divide the House upon the Address to her Majesty." And if Mr. Mildmay used strong language, the reader may be sure that Mr. Mildmay's followers used language much stronger. And Mr. Daubeny, who was the present leader of the House, and representative there of the ministry,—Lord De Terrier, the Premier, sitting in the House of Lords,—was not the man to allow these amenities to pass by without adequate replies. He and his friends were very strong in sarcasm, if they failed in argument, and lacked nothing for words, though it might perhaps be proved that they were short in numbers. It was considered that the speech in which Mr. Daubeny reviewed the long political life of Mr. Mildmay, and showed that Mr. Mildmay had been at one time a bugbear, and then a nightmare, and latterly simply a fungus, was one of the severest attacks, if not the most severe, that had been heard in that House since the Reform Bill. Mr. Mildmay, the while, was sitting with his hat low down over his eyes, and many men said

that he did not like it. But this speech was not made till after that dinner at Lord Brentford's, of which a short account must be given.

Had it not been for the overwhelming interest of the doings in Parliament at the commencement of the session, Phineas might have perhaps abstained from attending, in spite of the charm of novelty. For, in truth, Mr. Low's words had moved him much. But if it was to be his fate to be a member of Parliament only for ten days, surely it would be well that he should take advantage of the time to hear such a debate as this. It would be a thing to talk of to his children in twenty years' time, or to his grandchildren in fifty;—and it would be essentially necessary that he should be able to talk of it to Lady Laura Standish. He did, therefore, sit in the House till one on the Monday night, and till two on the Tuesday night, and heard the debate adjourned till the Thursday. On the Thursday Mr. Daubeny was to make his great speech, and then the division would come.

When Phineas entered Lady Laura's drawing-room on the Wednesday before dinner, he found the other guests all assembled. Why men should have been earlier in keeping their dinner engagements on that day than on any other he did not understand; but it was the fact, probably, that the great anxiety of the time made those who were at all concerned in the matter very keen to hear and to be heard. During these days everybody was in a hurry,—everybody was eager; and there was a common feeling that not a minute was to be lost. There were three ladies in the room,—Lady Laura, Miss Fitzgibbon, and Mrs. Bonteen. The latter was the wife of a gentleman who had been

a former Lord of the Admiralty in the late Government, and who lived in the expectation of filling, perhaps, some higher office in the Government which, as he hoped, was soon to be called into existence. There were five gentlemen beside Phineas Finn himself,—Mr. Bonteen, Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Fitzgibbon, Barrington Erle, who had been caught in spite of all that Lady Laura had said as to the difficulty of such an operation, and Lord Brentford. Phineas was quick to observe that every male guest was in Parliament, and to tell himself that he would not have been there unless he also had had a seat.

"We are all here now," said the Earl, ringing the bell.

"I hope I 've not kept you waiting," said Phineas.

"Not at all," said Lady Laura. "I do not know why we are in such a hurry. And how many do you say it will be, Mr. Finn?"

"Seventeen, I suppose," said Phineas.

"More likely twenty-two," said Mr. Bonteen. "There is Colcleugh so ill they can't possibly bring him up, and young Rochester is at Vienna, and Gunning is sulking about something, and Moody has lost his eldest son. By George! they pressed him to come up, although Frank Moody won't be buried till Friday."

"I don't believe it," said Lord Brentford.

"You ask some of the Carlton fellows, and they 'll own it."

"If I 'd lost every relation I had in the world," said Fitzgibbon, "I 'd vote on such a question as this. Staying away won't bring poor Frank Moody back to life."

"But there 's a decency in these matters, is there not, Mr. Fitzgibbon?" said Lady Laura.

"I thought they had thrown all that kind of thing overboard long ago," said Miss Fitzgibbon. "It would be better that they should have no veil, than squabble about the thickness of it."

Then dinner was announced. The Earl walked off with Miss Fitzgibbon, Barrington Erle took Mrs. Bonteen, and Mr. Fitzgibbon took Lady Laura.

"I 'll bet four pounds to two it 's over nineteen," said Mr. Bonteen, as he passed through the drawing-room door. The remark seemed to have been addressed to Mr. Kennedy, and Phineas therefore made no reply.

"I dare say it will," said Kennedy, "but I never bet."

"But you vote—sometimes, I hope," said Bonteen.

"Sometimes," said Mr. Kennedy.

"I think he is the most odious man that ever I set my eyes on," said Phineas to himself as he followed Mr. Kennedy into the dining-room. He had observed that Mr. Kennedy had been standing very near to Lady Laura in the drawing-room, and that Lady Laura had said a few words to him. He was more determined than ever that he would hate Mr. Kennedy, and would probably have been moody and unhappy throughout the whole dinner had not Lady Laura called him to a chair at her left hand. It was very generous of her; and the more so, as Mr. Kennedy had, in a half-hesitating manner, prepared to seat himself in that very place. As it was, Phineas and Mr. Kennedy were neighbours, but Phineas had the place of honour.

"I suppose you will not speak during the debate?" said Lady Laura.

"Who? I? Certainly not. In the first place, I

could not get a hearing, and, in the next place, I should not think of commencing on such an occasion. I do not know that I shall ever speak at all."

"Indeed you will. You are just the sort of man who will succeed with the House. What I doubt is, whether you will do as well in office."

"I wish I might have the chance."

"Of course you can have the chance if you try for it. Beginning so early, and being on the right side,—and, if you will allow me to say so, among the right set,—there can be no doubt that you may take office if you will. But I am not sure that you will be tractable. You cannot begin, you know, by being Prime Minister."

"I have seen enough to realise that already," said Phineas.

"If you will only keep that little fact steadily before your eyes, there is nothing you may not reach in official life. But Pitt was Prime Minister at four-and-twenty, and that precedent has ruined half our young politicians."

"It has not affected me, Lady Laura."

"As far as I can see, there is no great difficulty in government. A man must learn to have words at command when he is on his legs in the House of Commons, in the same way as he would if he were talking to his own servants. He must keep his temper; and he must be very patient. As far as I have seen Cabinet Ministers, they are not more clever than other people."

"I think there are generally one or two men of ability in the Cabinet."

"Yes, of fair ability. Mr. Mildmay is a good spec-

imen. There is not, and never was, anything brilliant in him. He is not eloquent, nor, as far as I am aware, did he ever create anything. But he has always been a steady, honest, persevering man, and circumstances have made politics come easy to him."

"Think of the momentous questions which he has been called upon to decide," said Phineas.

"Every question so handled by him has been decided rightly according to his own party, and wrongly according to the party opposite. A political leader is so sure of support and so sure of attack, that it is hardly necessary for him to be even anxious to be right. For the country's sake, he should have officials under him who know the routine of business."

"You think very badly then of politics as a profession."

"No; I think of them very highly. It must be better to deal with the repeal of laws than the defending of criminals. But all this is papa's wisdom, not mine. Papa has never been in the Cabinet yet, and therefore of course he is a little caustic."

"I think he was quite right," said Barrington Erle stoutly. He spoke so stoutly that everybody at the table listened to him.

"I don't exactly see the necessity for such internecine war just at present," said Lord Brentford.

"I must say I do," said the other. "Lord De Terrier took office knowing that he was in a minority. We had a fair majority of nearly thirty when he came in."

"Then how very soft you must have been to go out," said Miss Fitzgibbon.

"Not in the least soft," continued Barrington Erle.

"We could not command our men, and were bound to go out. For aught we know, some score of them might have chosen to support Lord De Terrier, and then we should have owned ourselves beaten for the time."

"You were beaten,—hollow," said Miss Fitzgibbon.

"Then why did Lord De Terrier dissolve?"

"A Prime Minister is quite right to dissolve in such a position," said Lord Brentford. "He must do so for the Queen's sake. It is his only chance."

"Just so. It is, as you say, his only chance, and it is his right. His very possession of power will give him near a score of votes, and if he thinks that he has a chance, let him try it. We maintain that he had no chance, and that he must have known that he had none:—that if he could not get on with the late House, he certainly could not get on with a new House. We let him have his own way as far as we could in February. We had failed last summer, and if he could get along he was welcome. But he could not get along."

"I must say I think he was right to dissolve," said Lady Laura.

"And we are right to force the consequences upon him as quickly as we can. He practically lost nine seats by his dissolution. Look at Loughshane."

"Yes; look at Loughshane," said Miss Fitzgibbon. "The country at any rate has gained something there."

"It 's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, Mr. Finn," said the Earl.

"What on earth is to become of poor George?" said Mr. Fitzgibbon. "I wonder whether any one knows where he is. George was n't a bad sort of fellow."

"Roby used to think that he was a very bad fellow," said Mr. Bonteen. "Roby used to swear that it was hopeless trying to catch him." It may be as well to explain that Mr. Roby was a conservative gentleman of great fame who had for years acted as Whip under Mr. Daubeny, and who now filled the high office of Patronage Secretary to the Treasury. "I believe in my heart," continued Mr. Bonteen, "that Roby is rejoiced that poor George Morris should be out in the cold."

"If seats were halveable, he should share mine, for the sake of auld lang syne," said Laurence Fitzgibbon.

"But not to-morrow night," said Barrington Erle; "the division to-morrow will be a thing not to be joked with. Upon my word I think they 're right about old Moody. All private considerations should give way. And as for Gunning, I 'd have him up or I 'd know the reason why."

"And shall we have no defaulters, Barrington?" asked Lady Laura.

"I 'm not going to boast, but I don't know of one for whom we need blush. Sir Everard Powell is so bad with gout that he can't even bear any one to look at him, but Rattler says that he 'll bring him up." Mr. Rattler was in those days the Whip on the liberal side of the House.

"Unfortunate wretch!" said Miss Fitzgibbon.

"The worst of it is that he screams in his paroxysms," said Mr. Bonteen.

"And you mean to say that you 'll take him into the lobby," said Lady Laura.

"Undoubtedly," said Barrington Erle. "Why not? He has no business with a seat if he can't vote. But

Sir Everard is a good man, and he 'll be there if laudanum and bath-chair make it possible."

The same kind of conversation went on during the whole of dinner, and became, if anything, more animated when the three ladies had left the room. Mr. Kennedy made but one remark, and then he observed that as far as he could see a majority of nineteen would be as serviceable as a majority of twenty. This he said in a very mild voice, and in a tone that was intended to be expressive of doubt; but in spite of his humility Barrington Erle flew at him almost savagely, —as though a liberal member of the House of Commons was disgraced by so mean a spirit; and Phineas found himself despising the man for his want of zeal.

"If we are to beat them, let us beat them well," said Phineas.

"Let there be no doubt about it," said Barrington Erle.

"I should like to see every man with a seat polled," said Bonteen.

"Poor Sir Everard!" said Lord Brentford. "It will kill him, no doubt, but I suppose the seat is safe."

"Oh yes; Llanwrwsth is quite safe," said Barrington, in his eagerness omitting to catch Lord Brentford's grim joke.

Phineas went up into the drawing-room for a few minutes after dinner, and was eagerly desirous of saying a few more words,—he knew not what words,—to Lady Laura. Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Bonteen had left the dining-room first, and Phineas again found Mr. Kennedy standing close to Lady Laura's shoulder. Could it be possible that there was anything in it? Mr. Kennedy was an unmarried man, with an immense

fortune, a magnificent place, a seat in Parliament, and was not perhaps above forty years of age. There could be no reason why he should not ask Lady Laura to be his wife,—except, indeed, that he did not seem to have sufficient words at command to ask anybody for anything. But could it be that such a woman as Lady Laura could accept such a man as Mr. Kennedy because of his wealth, and because of his fine place,—a man who had not a word to throw to a dog, who did not seem to be possessed of an idea, who hardly looked like a gentleman;—so Phineas told himself. But in truth Mr. Kennedy, though he was a plain, unattractive man, with nothing in his personal appearance to call for remark, was not unlike a gentleman in his usual demeanour. Phineas himself, it may be here said, was six feet high, and very handsome, with bright blue eyes, and brown wavy hair, and light silken beard. Mrs. Low had told her husband more than once that he was much too handsome to do any good. Mr. Low, however, had replied that young Finn had never shown himself to be conscious of his own personal advantages. "He 'll learn it soon enough," said Mrs. Low. "Some woman will tell him, and then he 'll be spoilt." I do not think that Phineas depended much as yet on his own good looks, but he felt that Mr. Kennedy ought to be despised by such a one as Lady Laura Standish, because his looks were not good. And she must despise him! It could not be that a woman so full of life should be willing to put up with a man who absolutely seemed to have no life within him. And yet why was he there, and why was he allowed to hang about just over her shoulders? Phineas Finn began to feel himself to be an injured man.

But Lady Laura had the power of dispelling instantly this sense of injury. She had done it effectually in the dining-room by calling him to the seat by her side, to the express exclusion of the millionaire, and she did it again now by walking away from Mr. Kennedy to the spot on which Phineas had placed himself somewhat sulkily.

"Of course you 'll be at the club on Friday morning after the division," she said.

"No doubt."

"When you leave it, come and tell me what are your impressions, and what you think of Mr. Daubeny's speech. There 'll be nothing done in the House before four, and you 'll be able to run up to me."

"Certainly I will."

"I have asked Mr. Kennedy to come, and Mr. Fitzgibbon. I am so anxious about it, that I want to hear what different people say. You know, perhaps, that papa is to be in the Cabinet if there 's a change."

"Is he indeed?"

"Oh yes;—and you 'll come up?"

"Of course I will. Do you expect to hear much of an opinion from Mr. Kennedy?"

"Yes, I do. You don't quite know Mr. Kennedy yet. And you must remember that he will say more to me than he will to you. He 's not quick, you know, as you are, and has no enthusiasm on any subject;—but he has opinions, and sound opinions too." Phineas felt that Lady Laura was in a slight degree scolding him for the disrespectful manner in which he had spoken of Mr. Kennedy; and he felt also that he had committed himself,—that he had shown himself to be sore, and that she had seen and understood his soreness.

"The truth is I do not know him," said he, trying to correct his blunder.

"No;—not as yet. But I hope that you may some day, as he is one of those men who are both useful and estimable."

"I do not know that I can use him," said Phineas; "but if you wish it, I will endeavour to esteem him."

"I wish you to do both;—but that will all come in due time. I think it probable that in the early autumn there will be a great gathering of the real whig liberals at Loughlinter;—of those, I mean, who have their heart in it, and are at the same time gentlemen. If it is so, I should be sorry that you should not be there. You need not mention it, but Mr. Kennedy has just said a word about it to papa, and a word from him always means so much! Well;—good night; and mind you come up on Friday. You are going to the club now, of course. I envy you men your clubs more than I do the House;—though I feel that a woman's life is only half a life, as she cannot have a seat in Parliament."

Then Phineas went away, and walked down to Pall Mall with Laurence Fitzgibbon. He would have preferred to take his walk alone, but he could not get rid of his affectionate countryman. He wanted to think over what had taken place during the evening; and, indeed, he did so in spite of his friend's conversation. Lady Laura, when she first saw him after his return to London, had told him how anxious her father was to congratulate him on his seat, but the Earl had not spoken a word to him on the subject. The Earl had been courteous, as hosts customarily are, but had been in no way specially kind to him. And then Mr. Ken-

nedy! As to going to Loughlinter, he would not do such a thing,—not though the success of the liberal party were to depend on it. He declared to himself that there were some things which a man could not do. But although he was not altogether satisfied with what had occurred in Portman Square, he felt as he walked down arm-in-arm with Fitzgibbon that Mr. Low and Mr. Low's counsels must be scattered to the winds. He had thrown the die in consenting to stand for Loughshane, and must stand the hazard of the cast.

"Bedad, Phin, my boy, I don't think you 're listening to me at all," said Laurence Fitzgibbon.

"I 'm listening to every word you say," said Phineas.

"And if I have to go down to the ould country again this session, you 'll go with me?"

"If I can I will."

"That 's my boy! And it 's I that hope you 'll have the chance. What 's the good of turning these fellows out if one is n't to get something for one's trouble?"

CHAPTER VII.

MR. AND MRS. BUNCE.

It was three o'clock on the Thursday night before Mr. Daubeny's speech was finished. I do not think that there was any truth in the allegation made at the time, that he continued on his legs an hour longer than the necessities of his speech required, in order that five or six very ancient whigs might be wearied out and shrink to their beds. Let a whig have been ever so ancient and ever so weary, he would not have been allowed to depart from Westminster Hall that night. Sir Everard Powell was there in his bath-chair at twelve, with a doctor on one side of him and a friend on the other, in some purlieu of the House, and did his duty like a fine old Briton as he was. That speech of Mr. Daubeny's will never be forgotten by any one who heard it. Its studied bitterness had perhaps never been equalled, and yet not a word was uttered for the saying of which he could be accused of going beyond the limits of parliamentary antagonism. It is true that personalities could not have been closer, that accusations of political dishonesty and of almost worse than political cowardice and falsehood could not have been clearer, that no words in the language could have attributed meaner motives or more unscrupulous conduct. But, nevertheless, Mr. Daubeny in all that he said was parliamentary, and showed himself to be a gladiator thoroughly well trained for the arena in which he had

descended to the combat. His arrows were poisoned, and his lance was barbed, and his shot was heated red, —because such things are allowed. He did not poison his enemies' wells or use Greek fire, because those things are not allowed. He knew exactly the rules of the combat. Mr. Mildmay sat and heard him without once raising his hat from his brow, or speaking a word to his neighbour. Men on both sides of the House said that Mr. Mildmay suffered terribly; but as Mr. Mildmay uttered no word of complaint to any one, and was quite ready to take Mr. Daubeny by the hand the next time they met in company, I do not know that any one was able to form a true idea of Mr. Mildmay's feelings. Mr. Mildmay was an impassive man who rarely spoke of his own feelings, and no doubt sat with his hat low down over his eyes in order that no man might judge of them on that occasion by the impression on his features. "If he could have left off half an hour earlier it would have been perfect as an attack," said Barrington Erle in criticising Mr. Daubeny's speech, "but he allowed himself to sink into comparative weakness, and the glory of it was over before the end."—Then came the division. The liberals had 333 votes to 314 for the conservatives, and therefore counted a majority of 19. It was said that so large a number of members had never before voted at any division.

"I own I 'm disappointed," said Barrington Erle to Mr. Rattler.

"I thought there would be twenty," said Mr. Rattler. "I never went beyond that. I knew they would have old Moody up, but I thought Gunning would have been too hard for them."

"They say they 've promised them both peerages."

"Yes;—if they remain in. But they know they 're going out."

"They must go, with such a majority against them," said Barrington Erle.

"Of course they must," said Mr. Rattler. "Lord De Terrier wants nothing better, but it is rather hard upon poor Daubeny. I never saw such an unfortunate old Tantalus."

"He gets a good drop of real water now and again, and I don't pity him in the least. He 's clever of course, and has made his own way, but I 've always a feeling that he has no business where he is. I suppose we shall know all about it at Brooks's by one o'clock to-morrow."

Phineas, though it had been past five before he went to bed,—for there had been much triumphant talking to be done among liberal members after the division,—was up at his breakfast at Mrs. Bunce's lodgings by nine. There was a matter which he was called upon to settle immediately in which Mrs. Bunce herself was much interested, and respecting which he had promised to give an answer on this very morning. A set of very dingy chambers up two pairs of stairs at No. 9, Old Square, Lincoln's Inn, to which Mr. Low had recommended him to transfer himself and all his belongings, were waiting his occupation, should he resolve upon occupying them. If he intended to commence operations as a barrister, it would be necessary that he should have chambers and a clerk; and before he had left Mr. Low's house on Sunday evening he had almost given that gentleman authority to secure for him these rooms at No. 9. "Whether you remain in Par-

liament or no, you must make a beginning," Mr. Low had said;—"and how are you ever to pretend to begin if you don't have chambers?" Mr. Low hoped that he might be able to wean Phineas away from his Parliament bauble; that he might induce the young barrister to give up his madness, if not this session or the next, at any rate before a third year had commenced. Mr. Low was a persistent man, liking very much when he did like, and loving very strongly when he did love. He would have many a tug for Phineas Finn before he would allow that false Westminster Satan to carry off the prey as altogether his own. If he could only get Phineas into the dingy chambers he might do much!

But Phineas had now become so imbued with the atmosphere of politics, had been so breathed upon by Lady Laura and Barrington Erle, that he could no longer endure the thought of any other life than that of a life spent among the lobbies. A desire to help to beat the conservatives had fastened on his very soul, and almost made Mr. Low odious in his eyes. He was afraid of Mr. Low, and for the nonce would not go to him any more;—but he must see the porter at Lincoln's Inn, he must write a line to Mr. Low, and he must tell Mrs. Bunce that for the present he would still keep on her rooms. His letter to Mr. Low was as follows:—

"Great Marlborough Street, May, 186—.

"My dear Low,—I have made up my mind against taking the chambers, and am now off to the Inn to say that I shall not want them. Of course, I know what you will think of me, and it is very grievous to me to have to bear the hard judgment of a man

whose opinion I value so highly; but, in the teeth of your terribly strong arguments, I think that there is something to be said on my side of the question. This seat in Parliament has come in my way by chance, and I think it would be pusillanimous in me to reject it, feeling, as I do, that a seat in Parliament confers very great honour. I am, too, very fond of politics, and regard legislation as the finest profession going. Had I any one dependent on me, I probably might not be justified in following the bent of my inclination. But I am all alone in the world, and therefore have a right to make the attempt. If, after a trial of one or two sessions, I should fail in that which I am attempting, it will not even then be too late to go back to the better way. I can assure you that at any rate it is not my intention to be idle.

"I know very well how you will fret and fume over what I say, and how utterly I shall fail in bringing you round to my way of thinking; but as I must write to tell you of my decision, I cannot refrain from defending myself to the best of my ability.

"Yours always faithfully,

"PHINEAS FINN."

Mr. Low received this letter at his chambers, and when he had read it, he simply pressed his lips closely together, placed the sheet of paper back in its envelope, and put it into a drawer at his left hand. Having done this, he went on with what work he had before him, as though his friend's decision were a matter of no consequence to him. As far as he was concerned the thing was done, and there should be an end of it. So he told himself; but nevertheless his mind was full

of it all day; and, though he wrote not a word of answer to Phineas, he made a reply within his own mind to every one of the arguments used in the letter. "Great honours! How can there be honour in what comes, as he says, by chance? He has n't sense enough to understand that the honour comes from the mode of winning it, and from the mode of wearing it; and that the very fact of his being member for Loughshane at this instant simply proves that Loughshane should have had no privilege to return a member! No one dependent on him! Are not his father and his mother and his sisters dependent on him as long as he must eat their bread till he can earn bread of his own? He will never earn bread of his own. He will always be eating bread that others have earned." In this way, before the day was over, Mr. Low became very angry, and swore to himself that he would have nothing more to say to Phineas Finn. But yet he found himself creating plans for encountering and conquering the parliamentary fiend who was at present so cruelly potent with his pupil. It was not till the third evening that he told his wife that Finn had made up his mind not to take chambers. "Then I would have nothing more to say to him," said Mrs. Low savagely. "For the present I can have nothing more to say to him." "But neither now nor ever," said Mrs. Low, with great emphasis; "he has been false to you." "No," said Mr. Low, who was a man thoroughly and thoughtfully just at all points; "he has not been false to me. He has always meant what he has said, when he was saying it. But he is weak and blind, and flies like a moth to the candle; one pities the poor moth, and would save him a stump of his wing if it be possible."

Phineas, when he had written his letter to Mr. Low, started off for Lincoln's Inn, making his way through the well-known dreary streets of Soho, and through St. Giles's, to Long Acre. He knew every corner well, for he had walked the same road almost daily for the last three years. He had conceived a liking for the route, which he might easily have changed without much addition to the distance, by passing through Oxford Street and Holborn; but there was an air of business on which he prided himself in going by the most direct passage, and he declared to himself very often that things dreary and dingy to the eye might be good in themselves. Lincoln's Inn itself is dingy, and the Law Courts therein are perhaps the meanest in which Equity ever disclosed herself. Mr. Low's three rooms in the Old Square, each of them brown with the binding of law books and with the dust collected on law papers, and with furniture that had been brown always, and had become browner with years, were perhaps as unattractive to the eye of a young pupil as any rooms which were ever entered. And the study of the Chancery law itself is not an alluring pursuit till the mind has come to have some insight into the beauty of its ultimate object. Phineas, during his three years' course of reasoning on these things, had taught himself to believe that things ugly on the outside might be very beautiful within; and had therefore come to prefer crossing Poland Street and Soho Square, and so continuing his travels by the Seven Dials and Long Acre. His morning walk was of a piece with his morning studies, and he took pleasure in the gloom of both. But now the taste of his palate had been already changed by the glare of the lamps in and about palatial West-

minster, and he found that St. Giles's was disagreeable. The ways about Pall Mall and across the Park to Parliament Street, or to the Treasury, were much pleasanter, and the new offices in Downing Street, already half built, absorbed all that interest which he had hitherto been able to take in the suggested but uncommenced erection of new Law Courts in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn. As he made his way to the porter's lodge under the great gateway of Lincoln's Inn, he told himself that he was glad that he had escaped, at any rate for a while, from a life so dull and dreary. If he could only sit in chambers at the Treasury instead of chambers in that old court, how much pleasanter it would be! After all, as regarded that question of income, it might well be that the Treasury chambers should be the more remunerative, and the more quickly remunerative, of the two. And, as he thought, Lady Laura might be compatible with the Treasury chambers and Parliament, but could not possibly be made compatible with Old Square, Lincoln's Inn.

But nevertheless there came upon him a feeling of sorrow when the old man at the lodge seemed to be rather glad than otherwise that he did not want the chambers. "Then Mr. Green can have them," said the porter; "that 'll be good news for Mr. Green. I don't know what the gen'lemen 'll do for chambers if things goes on as they 're going." Mr. Green was welcome to the chambers as far as Phineas was concerned; but Phineas felt nevertheless a certain amount of regret that he should have been compelled to abandon a thing which was regarded both by the porter and by Mr. Green as being so desirable. He had, however,

written his letter to Mr. Low, and made his promise to Barrington Erle, and was bound to Lady Laura Standish; and he walked out through the old gateway into Chancery Lane, resolving that he would not even visit Lincoln's Inn again for a year. There were certain books,—law books,—which he would read at such intervals of leisure as politics might give him; but within the precincts of the Inns of Court he would not again put his foot for twelve months, let learned pundits of the law,—such, for instance, as Mr. and Mrs. Low,—say what they might.

He had told Mrs. Bunce, before he left his home after breakfast, that he should for the present remain under her roof. She had been much gratified, not simply because lodgings in Great Marlborough Street are less readily let than chambers in Lincoln's Inn, but also because it was a great honour to her to have a member of Parliament in her house. Members of Parliament are not so common about Oxford Street as they are in the neighbourhood of Pall Mall and St. James's Square. But Mr. Bunce, when he came home to his dinner, did not join as heartily as he should have done in his wife's rejoicing. Mr. Bunce was in the employment of certain copying law-stationers in Carey Street, and had a strong belief in the law as a profession;—but he had none whatever in the House of Commons. "And he 's given up going into chambers?" said Mr. Bunce to his wife.

"Given it up altogether for the present," said Mrs. Bunce.

"And he don't mean to have no clerk?" said Mr. Bunce.

"Not unless it is for his Parliament work."

"There ain't no clerks wanted for that, and what 's worse, there ain't no fees to pay 'em. I 'll tell you what it is, Jane;—if you don't look sharp there won't be nothing to pay you before long."

"And he in Parliament, Jacob!"

"There ain't no salary for being in Parliament. There are scores of them Parliament gents ain't got so much as 'll pay their dinners for 'em. And then if anybody does trust 'em, there 's no getting at 'em to make 'em pay as there is at other folk."

"I don't know that our Mr. Phineas will ever be like that, Jacob."

"That 's gammon, Jane. That 's the way as women gets themselves took in always. Our Mr. Phineas! Why should our Mr. Phineas be better than anybody else?"

"He 's always acted handsome, Jacob."

"There was one time he could not pay his lodgings for well-nigh nine months, till his governor come down with the money. I don't know whether that was handsome. It knocked me about terrible, I know."

"He always meant honest, Jacob."

"I don't know that I care much for a man's meaning when he runs short of money. How is he going to see his way, with his seat in Parliament, and this giving up of his profession? He owes us near a quarter now."

"He paid me two months this morning, Jacob; so he don't owe a farthing."

"Very well;—so much the better for us. I shall just have a few words with Mr. Low, and see what he says to it. For myself I don't think half so much of Parliament folk as some do. They 're for promising

everything before they 's elected; but not one in twenty of 'em is as good as his word when he gets there."

Mr. Bunce was a copying journeyman, who spent ten hours a day in Carey Street with a pen between his fingers; and after that he would often spend two or three hours of the night with a pen between his fingers in Marlborough Street. He was a thoroughly hard-working man, doing pretty well in the world, for he had a good house over his head, and always could find raiment and bread for his wife and eight children; but, nevertheless, he was an unhappy man because he suffered from political grievances, or, I should more correctly say, that his grievances were semi-political and semi-social. He had no vote, not being himself the tenant of the house in Great Marlborough Street. The tenant was a tailor who occupied the shop, whereas Bunce occupied the whole of the remainder of the premises. He was a lodger, and lodgers were not as yet trusted with the franchise. And he had ideas, which he himself admitted to be very raw, as to the injustice of the manner in which he was paid for his work. So much a folio, without reference to the way in which his work was done, without regard to the success of his work, with no questions asked of himself, was, as he thought, no proper way of remunerating a man for his labours. He had long since joined a Trade Union, and for two years past had paid a subscription of a shilling a week towards its funds. He longed to be doing some battle against his superiors, and to be putting himself in opposition to his employers;—not that he objected personally to Messrs. Foolscap, Margin & Vellum, who always made much of him

as a useful man;—but because some such antagonism would be manly, and the fighting of some battle would be the right thing to do. "If Labour don't mean to go to the wall himself," Bunce would say to his wife, "Labour must look alive, and put somebody else there."

Mrs. Bunce was a comfortable motherly woman, who loved her husband but hated politics. As he had an aversion to his superiors in the world because they were his superiors, so had she a liking for them for the same reason. She despised people poorer than herself, and thought it a fair subject for boasting that her children always had meat for dinner. If it was ever so small a morsel, she took care that they had it, in order that the boast might be maintained. The world had once or twice been almost too much for her,—when, for instance, her husband had been ill; and again, to tell the truth, for the last three months of that long period in which Phineas had omitted to pay his bills; but she had kept a fine brave heart during those troubles, and could honestly swear that the children always had a bit of meat, though she herself had been occasionally without it for days together. At such times she would be more than ordinarily meek to Mr. Margin, and especially courteous to the old lady who lodged in her first-floor drawing-room,—for Phineas lived up two pairs of stairs,—and she would excuse such servility by declaring that there was no knowing how soon she might want assistance. But her husband, in such emergencies, would become furious and quarrelsome, and would declare that Labour was going to the wall, and that something very strong must be done at once. That shilling which Bunce paid weekly

to the Union she regarded as being absolutely thrown away,—as much so as though he cast it weekly into the Thames. And she had told him so, over and over again, making heart-piercing allusions to the eight children and to the bit of meat. He would always endeavour to explain to her that there was no other way under the sun for keeping Labour from being sent to the wall;—but he would do so hopelessly and altogether ineffectually, and she had come to regard him as a lunatic to the extent of that one weekly shilling.

She had a woman's instinctive partiality for comeliness in a man, and was very fond of Phineas Finn because he was handsome. And now she was very proud of him because he was a member of Parliament. She had heard,—from her husband, who had told her the fact with much disgust,—that the sons of dukes and earls go into Parliament, and she liked to think that the fine young man to whom she talked more or less every day should sit with the sons of dukes and earls. When Phineas had really brought distress upon her by owing her some thirty or forty pounds, she could never bring herself to be angry with him,—because he was handsome and because he dined out with lords. And she had triumphed greatly over her husband, who had desired to be severe upon his aristocratic debtor, when the money had all been paid in a lump.

"I don't know that he 's any great catch," Bunce had said, when the prospect of their lodger's departure had been debated between them.

"Jacob," said his wife, "I don't think you feel it when you 've got people respectable about you."

"The only respectable man I know," said Jacob,

"is the man as earns his bread; and Mr. Finn, as I take it, is a long way from that yet."

Phineas returned to his lodgings before he went down to his club, and again told Mrs. Bunce that he had altogether made up his mind about the chambers. "If you 'll keep me I shall stay here for the first session, I dare say."

"Of course we shall be only too proud, Mr. Finn; and though it may n't perhaps be quite the place for a member of Parliament——"

"But I think it is quite the place."

"It 's very good of you to say so, Mr. Finn, and we 'll do our very best to make you comfortable. Respectable we are, I may say; and though Bunce is a bit rough sometimes——"

"Never to me, Mrs. Bunce."

"But he is rough,—and silly, too, with his radical nonsense, paying a shilling a week to a nasty Union just for nothing. Still he means well, and there ain't a man who works harder for his wife and children;—that I will say of him. And if he do talk politics——"

"But I like a man to talk politics, Mrs. Bunce."

"For a gentleman in Parliament of course it 's proper; but I never could see what good it could do to a law-stationer; and when he talks of Labour going to the wall, I always ask him whether he did n't get his wages regular last Saturday. But, Lord love you, Mr. Finn, when a man as is a journeyman has took up politics and joined a Trade Union, he ain't no better than a milestone for his wife to take and talk to him."

After that Phineas went down to the Reform Club, and made one of those who were buzzing there in little

crowds and uttering their prophecies as to future events. Lord De Terrier was to go out. That was certain. Whether Mr. Mildmay was to come in was uncertain. That he would go to Windsor to-morrow morning was not to be doubted; but it was thought very probable that he might plead his age, and decline to undertake the responsibility of forming a ministry.

"And what then?" said Phineas to his friend Fitzgibbon.

"Why, then there will be a choice out of three. There is the Duke, who is the most incompetent man in England; there is Monk, who is the most unfit; and there is Gresham, who is the most unpopular. I can't conceive it possible to find a worse Prime Minister than either of the three;—but the country affords no other."

"And which would Mildmay name?"

"All of them,—one after the other, so as to make the embarrassment the greater." That was Mr. Fitzgibbon's description of the crisis; but then it was understood that Mr. Fitzgibbon was given to romancing.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEWS ABOUT MR. MILDMAY AND SIR EVERARD.

FITZGIBBON and Phineas started together from Pall Mall for Portman Square,—as both of them had promised to call on Lady Laura,—but Fitzgibbon turned in at Brooks's as they walked up St. James's Square, and Phineas went on by himself in a cab. "You should belong here," said Fitzgibbon as his friend entered the cab, and Phineas immediately began to feel that he would have done nothing till he could get into Brooks's. It might be very well to begin by talking politics at the Reform Club. Such talking had procured for him his seat at Loughshane. But that was done now, and something more than talking was wanted for any further progress. Nothing, as he told himself, of political import was managed at the Reform Club. No influence from thence was ever brought to bear upon the adjustment of places under the Government, or upon the arrangement of cabinets. It might be very well to count votes at the Reform Club; but after the votes had been counted,—had been counted successfully,—Brooks's was the place, as Phineas believed, to learn at the earliest moment what would be the exact result of the success. He must get into Brooks's, if it might be possible for him. Fitzgibbon was not exactly the man to propose him. Perhaps the Earl of Brentford would do it.

Lady Laura was at home, and with her was sitting

—Mr. Kennedy. Phineas had intended to be triumphant as he entered Lady Laura's room. He was there with the express purpose of triumphing in the success of their great party, and of singing a pleasant pæan in conjunction with Lady Laura. But his trumpet was put out of tune at once when he saw Mr. Kennedy. He said hardly a word as he gave his hand to Lady Laura,—and then afterwards to Mr. Kennedy, who chose to greet him with this show of cordiality.

"I hope you are satisfied, Mr. Finn," said Lady Laura, laughing.

"Oh yes."

"And is that all? I thought to have found your joy quite irrepressible."

"A bottle of soda-water, though it is a very lively thing when opened, won't maintain its vivacity beyond a certain period, Lady Laura."

"And you have had your gas let off already?"

"Well,—yes; at any rate, the sputtering part of it. Nineteen is very well, but the question is whether we might not have had twenty-one."

"Mr. Kennedy has just been saying that not a single available vote has been missed on our side. He has just come from Brooks's, and that seems to be what they say there."

So Mr. Kennedy also was a member of Brooks's! At the Reform Club there certainly had been an idea that the number might have been swelled to twenty-one; but then, as Phineas began to understand, nothing was correctly known at the Reform Club. For an accurate appreciation of the political balances of the day, you must go to Brooks's.

"Mr. Kennedy must of course be right," said Phin-

eas. "I don't belong to Brooks's myself. But I was only joking, Lady Laura. There is, I suppose, no doubt that Lord De Terrier is out, and that is everything."

"He has probably tendered his resignation," said Mr. Kennedy.

"That is the same thing," said Phineas roughly.

"Not exactly," said Lady Laura. "Should there be any difficulty about Mr. Mildmay, he might, at the Queen's request, make another attempt."

"With a majority of nineteen against him!" said Phineas. "Surely Mr. Mildmay is not the only man in the country. There is the Duke, and there is Mr. Gresham,—and there is Mr. Monk." Phineas had at his tongue's end all the lesson that he had been able to learn at the Reform Club.

"I should hardly think the Duke would venture," said Mr. Kennedy.

"Nothing venture, nothing have," said Phineas. "It is all very well to say that the Duke is incompetent, but I do not know that anything very wonderful is required in the way of genius. The Duke has held his own in both Houses successfully, and he is both honest and popular. I quite agree that a Prime Minister at the present day should be commonly honest, and more than commonly popular."

"So you are all for the Duke, are you?" said Lady Laura, again smiling as she spoke to him.

"Certainly;—if we are deserted by Mr. Mildmay. Don't you think so?"

"I don't find it quite so easy to make up my mind as you do. I am inclined to think that Mr. Mildmay will form a government; and as long as there is that

prospect, I need hardly commit myself to an opinion as to his probable successor." Then the objectionable Mr. Kennedy took his leave, and Phineas was left alone with Lady Laura.

"It is glorious;—is it not?" he began, as soon as he found the field to be open for himself and his own manœuvring. But he was very young, and had not as yet learned the manner in which he might best advance his cause with such a woman as Lady Laura Standish. He was telling her too clearly that he could have no gratification in talking with her unless he could be allowed to have her all to himself. That might be very well if Lady Laura were in love with him, but would hardly be the way to reduce her to that condition.

"Mr. Finn," said she, smiling as she spoke, "I am sure that you did not mean it, but you were uncourteous to my friend Mr. Kennedy."

"Who? I? Was I? Upon my word, I did n't intend to be uncourteous."

"If I had thought you had intended it, of course I could not tell you of it. And now I take the liberty;—for it is a liberty——"

"Oh no."

"Because I feel so anxious that you should do nothing to mar your chances as a rising man."

"You are only too kind to me,—always."

"I know how clever you are, and how excellent are all your instincts; but I see that you are a little impetuous. I wonder whether you will be angry if I take upon myself the task of mentor."

"Nothing you could say would make me angry,—though you might make me very unhappy."

"I will not do that if I can help it. A mentor ought

to be very old, you know, and I am infinitely older than you are."

"I should have thought it was the reverse;—indeed, I may say that I know that it is," said Phineas.

"I am not talking of years. Years have very little to do with the comparative ages of men and women. A woman at forty is quite old, whereas a man at forty is young." Phineas, remembering that he had put down Mr. Kennedy's age as forty in his own mind, frowned when he heard this, and walked about the room in displeasure. "And therefore," continued Lady Laura, "I talk to you as though I were a kind of grandmother."

"You shall be my great-grandmother if you will only be kind enough to me to say what you really think."

"You must not then be so impetuous, and you must be a little more careful to be civil to persons to whom you may not take any particular fancy. Now Mr. Kennedy is a man who may be very useful to you."

"I do not want Mr. Kennedy to be of use to me."

"That is what I call being impetuous,—being young,—being a boy. Why should not Mr. Kennedy be of use to you as well as any one else? You do not mean to conquer the world all by yourself."

"No;—but there is something mean to me in the expressed idea that I should make use of any man,—and more especially of a man whom I don't like."

"And why do you not like him, Mr. Finn?"

"Because he is one of my Dr. Fells."

"You don't like him simply because he does not talk much. That may be a good reason why you should not make of him an intimate companion,—because you like talkative people; but it should be no ground for dislike."

Phineas paused for a moment before he answered her, thinking whether or not it would be well to ask her some question which might produce from her a truth which he would not like to hear. Then he did ask it. "And do you like him?" he said.

She too paused, but only for a second. "Yes,—I think I may say that I do like him."

"No more than that?"

"Certainly no more than that;—but that I think is a great deal."

"I wonder what you would say if any one asked you whether you liked me," said Phineas, looking away from her through the window.

"Just the same;—but without the doubt, if the person who questioned me had any right to ask the question. There are not above one or two who could have such a right."

"And I was wrong, of course, to ask it about Mr. Kennedy," said Phineas, looking out into the Square.

"I did not say so."

"But I see you think it."

"You see nothing of the kind. I was quite willing to be asked the question by you, and quite willing to answer it. Mr. Kennedy is a man of great wealth."

"What can that have to do with it?"

"Wait a moment, you impetuous Irish boy, and hear me out." Phineas liked being called an impetuous Irish boy, and came close to her, sitting where he could look up into her face; and then came a smile upon his own, and he was very handsome. "I say that he is a man of great wealth," continued Lady Laura; "and as wealth gives influence, he is of great use,—politically,—to the party to which he belongs."

"Oh, politically!"

"Am I to suppose you care nothing for politics? To such men, to men who think as you think, who are to sit on the same benches with yourself, and go into the same lobby, and be seen at the same club, it is your duty to be civil both for your own sake and for that of the cause. It is for the hermits of society to indulge in personal dislikings,—for men who have never been active and never mean to be active. I had been telling Mr. Kennedy how much I thought of you,—as a good liberal."

"And I came in and spoilt it all."

"Yes, you did. You knocked down my little house, and I must build it all up again."

"Don't trouble yourself, Lady Laura."

"I shall. It will be a great deal of trouble,—a great deal, indeed; but I shall take it. I mean you to be very intimate with Mr. Kennedy, and to shoot his grouse, and to stalk his deer, and to help to keep him in progress as a liberal member of Parliament. I am quite prepared to admit, as a friend, that he would go back without some such help."

"Oh;—I understand."

"I do not believe that you do understand at all, but I must endeavour to make you do so by degrees. If you are to be my political pupil, you must at any rate be obedient. The next time you meet Mr. Kennedy, ask him his opinion instead of telling him your own. He has been in Parliament twelve years, and he was a good deal older than you when he began." At this moment a side door was opened, and the red-haired, red-bearded man whom Phineas had seen before entered the room. He hesitated a moment, as though

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he were going to retreat again, and then began to pull about the books and toys which lay on one of the distant tables, as though he were in quest of some article. And he would have retreated had not Lady Laura called to him.

"Oswald," she said, "let me introduce you to Mr. Finn. Mr. Finn, I do not think you have ever met my brother, Lord Chiltern." Then the two young men bowed, and each of them muttered something. "Do not be in a hurry, Oswald. You have nothing special to take you away. Here is Mr. Finn come to tell us who are all the possible new Prime Ministers. He is uncivil enough not to have named papa."

"My father is out of the question," said Lord Chiltern.

"Of course he is," said Lady Laura; "but I may be allowed my little joke."

"I suppose he will at any rate be in the Cabinet," said Phineas.

"I know nothing whatever about politics," said Lord Chiltern.

"I wish you did," said his sister,—"with all my heart."

"I never did,—and I never shall, for all your wishing. It 's the meanest trade going, I think, and I 'm sure it 's the most dishonest. They talk of legs on the turf, and of course there are legs; but what are they to the legs in the House? I don't know whether you are in Parliament, Mr. Finn."

"Yes, I am; but do not mind me."

"I beg your pardon. Of course there are honest men there, and no doubt you are one of them."

"He is indifferent honest,—as yet," said Lady Laura.

"I was speaking of men who go into Parliament to look after Government places," said Lord Chiltern.

"That is just what I 'm doing," said Phineas. "Why should not a man serve the Crown? He has to work very hard for what he earns."

"I don't believe that the most of them work at all. However, I beg your pardon. I did n't mean you in particular."

"Mr. Finn is such a thorough politician that he will never forgive you," said Lady Laura.

"Yes, I will," said Phineas, "and I 'll convert him some day. If he does come into the House, Lady Laura, I suppose he 'll come on the right side?"

"I 'll never go into the House, as you call it," said Lord Chiltern. "But, I 'll tell you what; I shall be very happy if you 'll dine with me to-morrow at Moroni's. They give you a capital little dinner at Moroni's, and they 've the best Chateau Yquem in London."

"Do," said Lady Laura, in a whisper. "Oblige me."

Phineas was engaged to dine with one of the Vice-Chancellors on the day named. He had never before dined at the house of this great law luminary, whose acquaintance he had made through Mr. Low, and he had thought a great deal of the occasion. Mrs. Freemantle had sent him the invitation nearly a fortnight ago, and he understood there was to be an elaborate dinner-party. He did not know it for a fact, but he was in hopes of meeting the expiring Lord Chancellor. He considered it to be his duty never to throw away such a chance. He would in all respects have preferred Mr. Freemantle's dinner in Eaton Place, dull and heavy though it might probably be, to the chance of Lord Chiltern's companions at Moroni's.

Whatever might be the faults of our hero, he was not given to what is generally called dissipation by the world at large,—by which the world means self-indulgence. He cared not a brass farthing for Moroni's Chateau Yquem, nor for the wondrously studied repast which he would doubtless find prepared for him at that celebrated establishment in St. James's Street;—not a farthing as compared with the chance of meeting so great a man as Lord Moles. And Lord Chiltern's friends might probably be just the men whom he would not desire to know. But Lady Laura's request overrode everything with him. She had asked him to oblige her, and of course he would do so. Had he been going to dine with the incoming Prime Minister, he would have put off his engagement at her request. He was not quick enough to make an answer without hesitation; but after a moment's pause he said he should be most happy to dine with Lord Chiltern at Moroni's.

"That 's right; 7.30 sharp,—only I can tell you you won't meet any other members." Then the servant announced more visitors, and Lord Chiltern escaped out of the room before he was seen by the new-comers. These were Mrs. Bonteen and Laurence Fitzgibbon, and then Mr. Bonteen,—and after them Mr. Rattler the Whip, who was in a violent hurry, and did not stay there a moment, and then Barrington Erle and young Lord James Fitz-Howard, the youngest son of the Duke of St. Bungay. In twenty or thirty minutes there was a gathering of liberal political notabilities in Lady Laura's drawing-room. There were two great pieces of news by which they were all enthralled. Mr. Mildmay would not be Prime Minister, and Sir Everard Powell was—dead. Of course nothing quite positive

could be known about Mr. Mildmay. He was to be with the Queen at Windsor on the morrow at eleven o'clock, and it was improbable that he would tell his mind to any one before he told it to her Majesty. But there was no doubt that he had engaged "the Duke,"—so he was called by Lord James,—to go down to Windsor with him, that he might be in readiness if wanted. "I have learned that at home," said Lord James, who had just heard the news from his sister, who had heard it from the Duchess. Lord James was delighted with the importance given to him by his father's coming journey. From this, and from other equally well-known circumstances, it was surmised that Mr. Mildmay would decline the task proposed to him. This, nevertheless, was only a surmise,—whereas the fact with reference to Sir Everard was fully substantiated. The gout had flown to his stomach, and he was dead. "By —— yes; as dead as a herring," said Mr. Rattler, who at that moment, however, was not within hearing of either of the ladies present. And then he rubbed his hands, and looked as though he were delighted. And he was delighted,—not because his old friend Sir Everard was dead, but by the excitement of the tragedy. "Having done so good a deed in his last moments," said Laurence Fitzgibbon, "we may take it for granted that he will go straight to heaven." "I hope there will be no crowner's quest, Rattler," said Mr. Bonteen; "if there is I don't know how you 'll get out of it."

"I don't see anything in it so horrible," said Mr. Rattler. "If a fellow dies leading his regiment we don't think anything of it. Sir Everard's vote was of more service to his country than anything that a colo-

nel or a captain can do." But nevertheless I think that Mr. Rattler was somewhat in dread of future newspaper paragraphs, should it be found necessary to summon a coroner's inquest to sit upon poor Sir Everard.

While this was going on Lady Laura took Phineas apart for a moment. "I am so much obliged to you; I am indeed," she said.

"What nonsense."

"Never mind whether it 's nonsense or not;—but I am. I can't explain it all now, but I do so want you to know my brother. You may be of the greatest service to him,—of the very greatest. He is not half so bad as people say he is. In many ways he is very good,—very good. And he is very clever."

"At any rate I will think and believe no ill of him."

"Just so;—do not believe evil of him,—not more evil than you see. I am so anxious,—so very anxious to try to put him on his legs, and I find it so difficult to get any connecting link with him. Papa will not speak with him,—because of money."

"But he is friends with you."

"Yes; I think he loves me. I saw how distasteful it was to you to go to him;—and probably you were engaged?"

"One can always get off those sort of things if there is an object."

"Yes;—just so. And the object was to oblige me; —was it not?"

"Of course it was. But I must go now. We are to hear Daubeny's statement at four, and I would not miss it for worlds."

"I wonder whether you would go abroad with my

brother in the autumn? But I have no right to think of such a thing;—have I? At any rate I will not think of it yet. Good-bye,—I shall see you perhaps on Sunday if you are in town."

Phineas walked down to Westminster with his mind very full of Lady Laura and Lord Chiltern. What did she mean by her affectionate manner to himself, and what did she mean by the continual praises which she lavished upon Mr. Kennedy? Of whom was she thinking most, of Mr. Kennedy, or of him? She had called herself his mentor. Was the description of her feelings towards himself, as conveyed in that name, of a kind to be gratifying to him? No;—he thought not. But then might it not be within his power to change the nature of those feelings? She was not in love with him at present. He could not make any boast to himself on that head. But it might be within his power to compel her to love him. The female mentor might be softened. That she could not love Mr. Kennedy, he thought that he was quite sure. There was nothing like love in her manner to Mr. Kennedy. As to Lord Chiltern, Phineas would do whatever might be in his power. All that he really knew of Lord Chiltern was that he had gambled and that he had drunk.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT.

In the House of Lords that night, and in the House of Commons, the outgoing Ministers made their explanations. As our business at the present moment is with the Commons, we will confine ourselves to their chamber, and will do so the more willingly because the upshot of what was said in the two places was the same. The outgoing Ministers were very grave, very self-laudatory, and very courteous. In regard to courtesy it may be declared that no stranger to the ways of the place could have understood how such soft words could be spoken by Mr. Daubeny, beaten, so quickly after the very sharp words which he had uttered when he only expected to be beaten. He announced to his fellow-commoners that his right honourable friend and colleague Lord De Terrier had thought it right to retire from the Treasury. Lord De Terrier, in constitutional obedience to the vote of the Lower House, had resigned, and the Queen had been graciously pleased to accept Lord De Terrier's resignation. Mr. Daubeny could only inform the House that her Majesty had signified her pleasure that Mr. Mildmay should wait upon her to-morrow at eleven o'clock. Mr. Mildmay,—so Mr. Daubeny understood,—would be with her Majesty to-morrow at that hour. Lord De Terrier had found it to be his duty to recommend her Majesty to send

for Mr. Mildmay. Such was the real import of Mr. Daubeny's speech. That further portion of it in which he explained with blandest, most beneficent, honey-flowing words that his party would have done everything that the country could require of any party, had the House allowed it to remain on the Treasury benches for a month or two,—and explained also that his party would never recriminate, would never return evil for evil, would in no wise copy the factious opposition of their adversaries; that his party would now, as it ever had done, carry itself with the meekness of the dove, and the wisdom of the serpent;—all this, I say, was so generally felt by gentlemen on both sides of the House to be "leather and prunella," that very little attention was paid to it. The great point was that Lord De Terrier had resigned, and that Mr. Mildmay had been summoned to Windsor.

The Queen had sent for Mr. Mildmay in compliance with advice given to her by Lord De Terrier. And yet Lord De Terrier and his first lieutenant had used all the most practised efforts of their eloquence for the last three days in endeavouring to make their countrymen believe that no more unfitting Minister than Mr. Mildmay ever attempted to hold the reins of office! Nothing had been too bad for them to say of Mr. Mildmay,—and yet, in the very first moment in which they found themselves unable to carry on the Government themselves, they advised the Queen to send for that most incompetent and baneful statesman! We who are conversant with our own methods of politics, see nothing odd in this, because we are used to it; but surely in the eyes of strangers our practice must be very singular. There is nothing like it in any other

country—nothing as yet. Nowhere else is there the same good-humoured, affectionate, prize-fighting ferocity in politics. The leaders of our two great parties are to each other exactly as are the two champions of the ring who knock each other about for the belt and for five hundred pounds a side once in every two years. How they fly at each other, striking as though each blow should carry death if it were but possible! And yet there is no one whom the Birmingham Bantam respects so highly as he does Bill Burns the Brighton Bully, or with whom he has so much delight in discussing the merits of a pot of half-and-half. And so it was with Mr. Daubeny and Mr. Mildmay. In private life Mr. Daubeny almost adulated his elder rival,—and Mr. Mildmay never omitted an opportunity of taking Mr. Daubeny warmly by the hand. It is not so in the United States. There the same political enmity exists, but the political enmity produces private hatred. The leaders of parties there really mean what they say when they abuse each other, and are in earnest when they talk as though they were about to tear each other limb from limb. I doubt whether Mr. Daubeny would have injured a hair of Mr. Mildmay's venerable head, even for an assurance of six continued months in office.

When Mr. Daubeny had completed his statement, Mr. Mildmay simply told the House that he had received and would obey her Majesty's commands. The House would of course understand that he by no means meant to aver that the Queen would ever commission him to form a ministry. But if he took no such command from her Majesty it would become his duty to recommend her Majesty to impose the task upon some other person. Then everything was said that had to

be said, and members returned to their clubs. A certain damp was thrown over the joy of some excitable liberals by tidings which reached the House during Mr. Daubeny's speech. Sir Everard Powell was no more dead than was Mr. Daubeny himself. Now it is very unpleasant to find that your news is untrue, when you have been at great pains to disseminate it. "Oh, but he is dead," said Mr. Rattler. "Lady Powell assured me half an hour ago," said Mr. Rattler's opponent, "that he was at that moment a great deal better than he had been for the last three months. The journey down to the House did him a world of good." "Then we 'll have him down for every division," said Mr. Rattler.

The political portion of London was in a ferment for the next five days. On the Sunday morning it was known that Mr. Mildmay had declined to put himself at the head of a liberal Government. He and the Duke of St. Bungay, and Mr. Plantagenet Palliser, had been in conference so often, and so long, that it may almost be said they lived together in conference. Then Mr. Gresham had been with Mr. Mildmay,—and Mr. Monk also. At the clubs it was said by many that Mr. Monk had been with Mr. Mildmay; but it was also said very vehemently by others that no such interview had taken place. Mr. Monk was a radical, much admired by the people, sitting in Parliament for that most radical of all constituencies, the Pottery Hamlets, who had never as yet been in power. It was the great question of the day whether Mr. Mildmay would or would not ask Mr. Monk to join him; and it was said by those who habitually think at every period of change that the time has now come in which

the difficulties to forming a Government will at last be found to be insuperable, that Mr. Mildmay could not succeed either with Mr. Monk or without him. There were at the present moment two sections of these gentlemen,—the section which declared that Mr. Mildmay had sent for Mr. Monk, and the section which declared that he had not. But there were others, who perhaps knew better what they were saying, by whom it was asserted that the whole difficulty lay with Mr. Gresham. Mr. Gresham was willing to serve with Mr. Mildmay, —with certain stipulations as to the special seat in the Cabinet which he himself was to occupy, and as to the introduction of certain friends of his own; but,—so said these gentlemen who were supposed really to understand the matter,—Mr. Gresham was not willing to serve with the Duke and with Mr. Palliser. Now, everybody who knew anything knew that the Duke and Mr. Palliser were indispensable to Mr. Mildmay. And a liberal Government, with Mr. Gresham in the opposition, could not live half through a session! All Sunday and Monday these things were discussed; and on the Monday Lord De Terrier absolutely stated to the Upper House that he had received her Majesty's commands to form another Government. Mr. Daubeny, in half-a-dozen most modest words,—in words hardly audible, and most unlike himself, made his statement in the Lower House to the same effect. Then Mr. Rattler, and Mr. Bonteen, and Mr. Barrington Erle, and Mr. Laurence Fitzgibbon aroused themselves and swore that such things could not be. Should the prey which they had won for themselves, the spoil of their bows and arrows, be snatched from out of their very mouths by treachery? Lord De Terrier and Mr.

Daubeny could not venture even to make another attempt unless they did so in combination with Mr. Gresham. Such a combination, said Mr. Barrington Erle, would be disgraceful to both parties, but would prove Mr. Gresham to be as false as Satan himself. Early on the Tuesday morning, when it was known that Mr. Gresham had been at Lord De Terrier's house, Barrington Erle was free to confess that he had always been afraid of Mr. Gresham. "I have felt for years," said he, "that if anybody could break up the party it would be Mr. Gresham."

On that Tuesday morning Mr. Gresham certainly was with Lord De Terrier, but nothing came of it. Mr. Gresham was either not enough like Satan for the occasion, or else he was too closely like him. Lord De Terrier did not bid high enough, or else Mr. Gresham did not like biddings from that quarter. Nothing then came from this attempt, and on the Tuesday afternoon the Queen again sent for Mr. Mildmay. On the Wednesday morning the gentlemen who thought that the insuperable difficulties had at length arrived, began to wear their longest faces, and to be triumphant with melancholy forebodings. Now at last there was a dead lock. Nobody could form a Government. It was asserted that Mr. Mildmay had fallen at her Majesty's feet dissolved in tears, and had implored to be relieved from further responsibility. It was well known to many at the clubs that the Queen had on that morning telegraphed to Germany for advice. There were men so gloomy as to declare that the Queen must throw herself into the arms of Mr. Monk, unless Mr. Mildmay would consent to rise from his knees and once more buckle on his ancient armour. "Even that

would be better than Gresham," said Barrington Erle, in his anger. "I 'll tell you what it is," said Rattler, "we shall have Gresham and Monk together, and you and I shall have to do their biddings." Mr. Barrington Erle's reply to that suggestion I may not dare to insert in these pages.

On the Wednesday night, however, it was known that everything had been arranged, and before the Houses met on the Thursday every place had been bestowed, either in reality or in imagination. The Times, in its second edition on the Thursday, gave a list of the Cabinet, in which four places out of fourteen were rightly filled. On the Friday it named ten places aright, and indicated the law offices, with only one mistake in reference to Ireland; and on the Saturday it gave a list of the Under Secretaries of State, and Secretaries and Vice-Presidents generally, with wonderful correctness as to the individuals, though the offices were a little jumbled. The Government was at last formed in a manner which everybody had seen to be the only possible way in which a Government could be formed. Nobody was surprised, and the week's work was regarded as though the regular routine of Government making had simply been followed. Mr. Mildmay was Prime Minister; Mr. Gresham was at the Foreign Office; Mr. Monk was at the Board of Trade; the Duke was President of the Council; the Earl of Brentford was Privy Seal; and Mr. Palliser was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Barrington Erle made a step up in the world, and went to the Admiralty as Secretary; Mr. Bonteen was sent again to the Admiralty; and Laurence Fitzgibbon became a junior Lord of the Treasury. Mr. Rattler was, of course, installed as

Patronage Secretary to the same Board. Mr. Rattler was perhaps the only man in the party as to whose destination there could not possibly be a doubt. Mr. Rattler had really qualified himself for a position in such a way as to make all men feel that he would, as a matter of course, be called upon to fill it. I do not know whether as much could be said on behalf of any other man in the new Government.

During all this excitement, and through all these movements, Phineas Finn felt himself to be left more and more out in the cold. He had not been such a fool as to suppose that any office would be offered to him. He had never hinted at such a thing to his one dearly intimate friend, Lady Laura. He had not hitherto opened his mouth in Parliament. Indeed, when the new Government was formed he had not been sitting for above a fortnight. Of course nothing could be done for him as yet. But, nevertheless, he felt himself to be out in the cold. The very men who had discussed with him the question of the division,—who had discussed it with him because his vote was then as good as that of any other member,—did not care to talk to him about the distribution of places. He, at any rate, could not be one of them. He, at any rate, could not be a rival. He could neither mar nor assist. He could not be either a successful or a disappointed sympathiser,—because he could not himself be a candidate. The affair which perhaps disgusted him more than anything else was the offer of an office, not in the Cabinet, indeed, but one supposed to confer high dignity,—to Mr. Kennedy. Mr. Kennedy refused the offer, and this somewhat lessened Finn's disgust, but the offer itself made him unhappy.

"I suppose it was made simply because of his money," he said to Fitzgibbon.

"I don't believe that," said Fitzgibbon. "People seem to think that he has got a head on his shoulders, though he has got no tongue in it. I wonder at his refusing it because of the Right Honourable."

"I am so glad that Mr. Kennedy refused," said Lady Laura to him.

"And why? He would have been the Right Hon. Robert Kennedy forever and ever." Phineas when he said this did not as yet know exactly how it would have come to pass that such honour,—the honour of that enduring prefix to his name,—would have come in the way of Mr. Kennedy had Mr. Kennedy accepted the office in question; but he was very quick to learn all these things, and, in the meantime, he rarely made any mistake about them.

"What would that have been to him,—with his wealth?" said Lady Laura. "He has a position of his own and need not care for such things. There are men who should not attempt what is called independence in Parliament. By doing so they simply decline to make themselves useful. But there are a few whose special walk in life it is to be independent, and, as it were, unmoved by parties."

"Great Akinetoses! You know Orion," said Phineas.

"Mr. Kennedy is not an Akinetos," said Lady Laura.

"He holds a very proud position," said Phineas ironically.

"A very proud position indeed," said Lady Laura, in sober earnest.

The dinner at Moroni's had been eaten, and Phineas had given an account of the entertainment to Lord Chiltern's sister. There had been only two other guests, and both of them had been men on the turf. "I was the first there," said Phineas, "and he surprised me ever so much by telling me that you had spoken to him of me before."

"Yes; I did so. I wish him to know you. I want him to know some men who think of something besides horses. He is very well educated, you know, and would certainly have taken honours if he had not quarrelled with the people at Christ Church."

"Did he take a degree?"

"No;—they sent him down. It is best always to have the truth among friends. Of course you will hear it some day. They expelled him because he was drunk." Then Lady Laura burst out into tears, and Phineas sat near her, and consoled her, and swore that if in any way he could befriend her brother he would do so.

Mr. Fitzgibbon at this time claimed a promise which he said that Phineas had made to him,—that Phineas would go over with him to Mayo to assist at his re-election. And Phineas did go. The whole affair occupied but a week, and was chiefly memorable as being the means of cementing the friendship which existed between the two Irish members.

"A thousand a year!" said Laurence Fitzgibbon, speaking of the salary of his office. "It is n't much; is it? And every fellow to whom I owe a shilling will be down upon me. If I had studied my own comfort, I should have done the same as Kennedy."

CHAPTER X.

VIOLET EFFINGHAM.

It was now the middle of May, and a month had elapsed since the terrible difficulty about the Queen's Government had been solved. A month had elapsed, and things had shaken themselves into their places with more of ease and apparent fitness than men had given them credit for possessing. Mr. Mildmay, Mr. Gresham, and Mr. Monk were the best friends in the world, swearing by each other in their own House, and supported in the other by as gallant a phalanx of whig peers as ever were got together to fight against the instincts of their own order in compliance with the instincts of those below them. Lady Laura's father was in the Cabinet, to Lady Laura's infinite delight. It was her ambition to be brought as near to political action as was possible for a woman without surrendering any of the privileges of feminine inaction. That women should even wish to have votes at parliamentary elections was to her abominable, and the cause of the Rights of Women generally was odious to her; but, nevertheless, for herself, she delighted in hoping that she too might be useful,—in thinking that she too was perhaps, in some degree, politically powerful; and she had received considerable increase to such hopes when her father accepted the Privy Seal. The Earl himself was not an ambitious man, and, but for his daughter, would have severed himself altogether from

political life before this time. He was an unhappy man;—being an obstinate man, and having in his obstinacy quarrelled with his only son. In his unhappiness he would have kept himself alone, living in the country, brooding over his wretchedness, were it not for his daughter. On her behalf, and in obedience to her requirements, he came yearly up to London, and, perhaps in compliance with her persuasion, had taken some part in the debates of the House of Lords. It is easy for a peer to be a statesman, if the trouble of the life be not too much for him. Lord Brentford was now a statesman, if a seat in the Cabinet be proof of statesmanship.

At this time, in May, there was staying with Lady Laura in Portman Square a very dear friend of hers, by name Violet Effingham. Violet Effingham was an orphan, an heiress, and a beauty; with a terrible aunt, one Lady Baldock, who was supposed to be the dragon who had Violet, as a captive maiden, in charge. But as Miss Effingham was of age, and was mistress of her own fortune, Lady Baldock was, in truth, not omnipotent as a dragon should be. The dragon, at any rate, was not now staying in Portman Square, and the captivity of the maiden was therefore not severe at the present moment. Violet Effingham was very pretty, but could hardly be said to be beautiful. She was small, with light crispy hair, which seemed to be ever on the flutter round her brows, and which yet was never a hair astray. She had sweet, soft grey eyes, which never looked at you long, hardly for a moment, —but which yet, in that half moment, nearly killed you by the power of their sweetness. Her cheek was the softest thing in nature, and the colour of it, when its

colour was fixed enough to be told, was a shade of pink so faint and creamy that you would hardly dare to call it by its name. Her mouth was perfect, not small enough to give that expression of silliness which is so common, but almost divine, with the temptation of its full, rich, ruby lips. Her teeth, which she but seldom showed, were very even and very white, and there rested on her chin the dearest dimple that ever acted as a loadstar to men's eyes. The fault of her face, if it had a fault, was in her nose,—which was a little too sharp, and perhaps too small. A woman who wanted to depreciate Violet Effingham had once called her a pug-nosed puppet; but I, as her chronicler, deny that she was pug-nosed,—and all the world who knew her soon came to understand that she was no puppet. In figure she was small, but not so small as she looked to be. Her feet and hands were delicately fine, and there was a softness about her whole person, an apparent compressibility, which seemed to indicate that she might go into very small compass. Into what compass and how compressed, there were very many men who held very different opinions. Violet Effingham was certainly no puppet. She was great at dancing,—as perhaps might be a puppet,—but she was great also at archery, great at skating,—and great, too, at hunting. With reference to that last accomplishment, she and Lady Baldock had had more than one terrible tussle, not always with advantage to the dragon. "My dear aunt," she had said once during the last winter, "I am going to the meet with George,"—George was her cousin, Lord Baldock, and was the dragon's son,—"and there, let there be an end of it." "And you will promise me that you will not go further," said the

dragon. "I will promise nothing to-day to any man or to any woman," said Violet. What was to be said to a young lady who spoke in this way, and who had become of age only a fortnight since? She rode that day the famous run from Bagnall's Gorse to Foulsham Common, and was in at the death.

Violet Effingham was now sitting in conference with her friend Lady Laura, and they were discussing matters of high import,—of very high import, indeed, —to the interests of both of them. "I do not ask you to accept him," said Lady Laura.

"That is lucky," said the other, "as he has never asked me."

"He has done much the same. You know that he loves you."

"I know,—or fancy that I know,—that so many men love me! But, after all, what sort of love is it? It is just as when you and I, when we see something nice in a shop, call it a dear duck of a thing, and tell somebody to go and buy it, let the price be ever so extravagant. I know my own position, Laura. I 'm a dear duck of a thing."

"You are a very dear thing to Oswald."

"But you, Laura, will some day inspire a grand passion,—or I dare say have already, for you are a great deal too close to tell;—and then there will be cutting of throats, and a mighty hubbub, and a real tragedy. I shall never go beyond genteel comedy,—unless I run away with somebody beneath me, or do something awfully improper."

"Don't do that, dear."

"I should like to, because of my aunt. I should indeed. If it were possible, without compromising

myself, I should like her to be told some morning that I had gone off with the curate."

"How can you be so wicked, Violet!"

"It would serve her right,—and her countenance would be so awfully comic. Mind, if it is ever to come off, I must be there to see it. I know what she would say as well as possible. She would turn to poor Gussy. 'Augusta,' she would say, 'I always expected it. I always did.' Then I should come out and curtsey to her, and say so prettily, 'Dear aunt, it was only our little joke.' That 's my line. But for you, —you, if you planned it, would go off to-morrow with Lucifer himself if you liked him."

"But failing Lucifer, I shall probably be very humdrum."

"You don't mean that there is anything settled, Laura?"

"There is nothing settled,—or any beginning of anything that ever can be settled. But I am not talking about myself. He has told me that if you will accept him, he will do anything that you and I may ask him."

"Yes;—he will promise."

"Did you ever know him to break his word?"

"I know nothing about him, my dear. How should I?"

"Do not pretend to be ignorant and meek, Violet. You do know him,—much better than most girls know the men they marry. You have known him, more or less intimately, all your life."

"But am I bound to marry him because of that accident?"

"No; you are not bound to marry him,—unless you love him."

"I do not love him," said Violet, with slow, emphatic words, and a little forward motion of her face, as though she were specially eager to convince her friend that she was quite in earnest in what she said.

"I fancy, Violet, that you are nearer to loving him than any other man."

"I am not at all near to loving any man. I doubt whether I ever shall be. It does not seem to me to be possible to myself to be what girls call in love. I can like a man. I do like, perhaps, half-a-dozen. I like them so much that if I go to a house or to a party it is quite a matter of importance to me whether this man or that will or will not be there. And then I suppose I flirt with them. At least Augusta tells me that my aunt says that I do. But as for caring about any one of them in the way of loving him,—wanting to marry him, and have him all to myself, and that sort of thing,—I don't know what it means."

"But you intend to be married some day," said Lady Laura.

"Certainly I do. And I don't intend to wait very much longer. I am heartily tired of Lady Baldock, and though I can generally escape among my friends, that is not sufficient. I am beginning to think that it would be pleasant to have a house of my own. A girl becomes such a Bohemian when she is always going about, and does n't quite know where any of her things are."

Then there was a silence between them for a few minutes. Violet Effingham was doubled up in a corner of a sofa, with her feet tucked under her, and her face reclining upon one of her shoulders. And as she talked she was playing with a little toy which was constructed

to take various shapes as it was flung this way or that. A bystander looking at her would have thought that the toy was much more to her than the conversation. Lady Laura was sitting upright, in a common chair, at a table not far from her companion, and was manifestly devoting herself altogether to the subject that was being discussed between them. She had taken no lounging, easy attitude, she had found no employment for her fingers, and she looked steadily at Violet as she talked,—whereas Violet was looking only at the little manikin which she tossed. And now Laura got up and came to the sofa, and sat close to her friend. Violet, though she somewhat moved one foot, so as to seem to make room for the other, still went on with her play.

"If you do marry, Violet, you must choose some one man out of the lot."

"That 's quite true, my dear. I certainly can't marry them all."

"And how do you mean to make the choice?"

"I don't know. I suppose I shall toss up."

"I wish you would be in earnest with me."

"Well;—I will be in earnest. I shall take the first that comes after I have quite made up my mind. You 'll think it very horrible, but that is really what I shall do. After all, a husband is very much like a house or a horse. You don't take your house because it 's the best house in the world, but because just then you want a house. You go and see a house, and if it 's very nasty you don't take it. But if you think it will suit pretty well, and if you are tired of looking about for houses, you do take it. That 's the way one buys one's horses,—and one's husbands."

"And you have not made up your mind yet?"

"Not quite. Lady Baldock was a little more decent than usual just before I left Baddingham. When I told her that I meant to have a pair of ponies, she merely threw up her hands and grunted. She did n't gnash her teeth, and curse and swear, and declare to me that I was a child of perdition."

"What do you mean by cursing and swearing?"

"She told me once that if I bought a certain little dog, it would lead to my being everlastingly—you know what. She is n't so squeamish as I am, and said it out."

"What did you do?"

"I bought the little dog, and it bit my aunt's heel. I was very sorry then, and gave the creature to Mary Rivers. He was such a beauty! I hope the perdition has gone with him, for I don't like Mary Rivers at all. I had to give the poor beasty to somebody, and Mary Rivers happened to be there. I told her that Puck was connected with Apollyon, but she did n't mind that. Puck was worth twenty guineas, and I dare say she has sold him."

"Oswald may have an equal chance then among the other favourites?" said Lady Laura, after another pause.

"There are no favourites, and I will not say that any man may have a chance. Why do you press me about your brother in this way?"

"Because I am so anxious. Because it would save him. Because you are the only woman for whom he has ever cared, and because he loves you with all his heart; and because his father would be reconciled to him to-morrow if he heard that you and he were engaged."

"Laura, my dear——"

"Well."

"You won't be angry if I speak out?"

"Certainly not. After what I have said, you have a right to speak out."

"It seems to me that all your reasons are reasons why he should marry me;—not reasons why I should marry him."

"Is not his love for you a reason?"

"No," said Violet, pausing,—and speaking the word in the lowest possible whisper. "If he did not love me, that, if known to me, should be a reason why I should not marry him. Ten men may love me,—I don't say that any man does——"

"He does."

"But I can't marry all the ten. And as for that business of saving him——"

"You know what I mean!"

"I don't know that I have any special mission for saving young men. I sometimes think that I shall have quite enough to do to save myself. It is strange what a propensity I feel for the wrong side of the post."

"I feel the strongest assurance that you will always keep on the right side."

"Thank you, my dear. I mean to try, but I 'm quite sure that the jockey who takes me in hand ought to be very steady himself. Now, Lord Chiltern——"

"Well,—out with it. What have you to say?"

"He does not bear the best reputation in this world as a steady man. Is he altogether the sort of man that mammas of the best kind are seeking for their daughters? I like a roué myself;—and a prig who sits all night in the House, and talks about nothing

but church-rates and suffrage, is to me intolerable. I prefer men who are improper, and all that sort of thing. If I were a man myself I should go in for everything I ought to leave alone. I know I should. But you see,—I 'm not a man, and I must take care of myself. The wrong side of a post for a woman is so very much the wrong side. I like a fast man, but I know that I must not dare to marry the sort of man that I like."

"To be one of us, then,—the very first among us; —would that be the wrong side?"

"You mean that to be Lady Chiltern in the present tense, and Lady Brentford in the future, would be promotion for Violet Effingham in the past?"

"How hard you are, Violet!"

"Fancy,—that it should come to this,—that you should call me hard, Laura. I should like to be your sister. I should like well enough to be your father's daughter. I should like well enough to be Chiltern's friend. I am his friend. Nothing that any one has ever said of him has estranged me from him. I have fought for him till I have been black in the face. Yes, I have,—with my aunt. But I am afraid to be his wife. The risk would be so great. Suppose that I did not save him, but that he brought me to shipwreck instead?"

"That could not be!"

"Could it not? I think it might be so very well. When I was a child they used to be always telling me to mind myself. It seems to me that a child and a man need not mind themselves. Let them do what they may, they can be set right again. Let them fall as they will, you can put them on their feet. But a

woman has to mind herself;—and very hard work it is when she has a dragon of her own driving her ever the wrong way."

"I want to take you from the dragon."

"Yes;—and to hand me over to a griffin."

"The truth is, Violet, that you do not know Oswald. He is not a griffin."

"I did not mean to be uncomplimentary. Take any of the dangerous wild beasts you please. I merely intend to point out that he is a dangerous wild beast. I dare say he is noble-minded, and I will call him a lion if you like it better. But even with a lion there is risk."

"Of course there will be risk. There is risk with every man,—unless you will be contented with the prig you described. Of course there would be risk with my brother. He has been a gambler."

"They say he is one still."

"He has given it up in part, and would entirely at your instance."

"And they say other things of him, Laura."

"It is true. He has had paroxysms of evil life which have well-nigh ruined him."

"And these paroxysms are so dangerous! Is he not in debt?"

"He is,—but not deeply. Every shilling that he owes would be paid;—every shilling. Mind, I know all his circumstances, and I give you my word that every shilling should be paid. He has never lied,—and he has told me everything. His father could not leave an acre away from him if he would, and would not if he could."

"I did not ask as fearing that. I spoke only of a

dangerous habit. A paroxysm of spending money is apt to make one so uncomfortable. And then——"

"Well."

"I don't know why I should make a catalogue of your brother's weaknesses."

"You mean to say that he drinks too much?"

"I do not say so. People say so. The dragon says so. And as I always find her sayings to be untrue, I suppose this is like the rest of them."

"It is untrue if it be said of him as a habit."

"It is another paroxysm,—just now and then."

"Do not laugh at me, Violet, when I am taking his part, or I shall be offended."

"But you see, if I am to be his wife, it is—rather important."

"Still you need not ridicule me."

"Dear Laura, you know I do not ridicule you. You know I love you for what you are doing. Would not I do the same, and fight for him down to my nails if I had a brother?"

"And therefore I want you to be Oswald's wife;—because I know that you would fight for him. It is not true that he is a—drunkard. Look at his hand, which is as steady as yours. Look at his eye. Is there a sign of it? He has been drunk, once or twice, perhaps,—and has done fearful things."

"It might be that he would do fearful things to me."

"You never knew a man with a softer heart or with a finer spirit. I believe as I sit here that if he were married to-morrow, his vices would fall from him like old clothes."

"You will admit, Laura, that there will be some risk for the wife."

"Of course there will be a risk. Is there not always a risk?"

"The men in the City would call this double-dangerous, I think," said Violet. Then the door was opened, and the man of whom they were speaking entered the room.

CHAPTER XI.

LORD CHILTERN.

THE reader has been told that Lord Chiltern was a red man, and that peculiarity of his personal appearance was certainly the first to strike a stranger. It imparted a certain look of ferocity to him, which was apt to make men afraid of him at first sight. Women are not actuated in the same way, and are accustomed to look deeper into men at the first sight than other men will trouble themselves to do. His beard was red, and was clipped, so as to have none of the softness of waving hair. The hair on his head also was kept short, and was very red,—and the colour of his face was red. Nevertheless he was a handsome man, with well-cut features, not tall, but very strongly built, and with a certain curl in the corner of his eyelids which gave to him a look of resolution,—which perhaps he did not possess. He was known to be a clever man, and when very young had had the reputation of being a scholar. When he was three-and-twenty grey-haired votaries of the turf declared that he would make his fortune on the racecourse,—so clear-headed was he as to odds, so excellent a judge of a horse's performances, and so gifted with a memory of events. When he was five-and-twenty he had lost every shilling of a fortune of his own, had squeezed from his father more than his father ever chose to name in speaking of his

affairs to any one, and was known to be in debt. But he had sacrificed himself on one or two memorable occasions in conformity with turf laws of honour, and men said of him, either that he was very honest or very chivalric,—in acordance with the special views on the subject of the man who was speaking. It was reported now that he no longer owned horses on the turf;—but this was doubted by some who could name the animals which they said that he owned, and which he ran in the name of Mr. Macnab,—said some; of Mr. Pardoe,—said others; of Mr. Chickerwick,—said a third set of informants. The fact was that Lord Chiltern at this moment had no interest of his own in any horse upon the turf.

But all the world knew that he drank. He had taken by the throat a proctor's bull-dog when he had been drunk at Oxford, had nearly strangled the man, and had been expelled. He had fallen through his violence into some terrible misfortune at Paris, had been brought before a public judge, and his name and his infamy had been made notorious in every newspaper in the two capitals. After that he had fought a ruffian at Newmarket, and had really killed him with his fists. In reference to this latter affray it had been proved that the attack had been made on him, that he had not been to blame, and that he had not been drunk. After a prolonged investigation he had come forth from that affair without disgrace. He would have done so, at least, if he had not been heretofore disgraced. But we all know how the man well spoken of may steal a horse, while he who is of evil repute may not look over a hedge. It was asserted widely by many who were supposed to know all about every-

thing that Lord Chiltern was in a fit of delirium tremens when he killed the ruffian at Newmarket. The worst of that latter affair was that it produced the total estrangement which now existed between Lord Brentford and his son. Lord Brentford would not believe that his son was in that matter more sinned against than sinning. "Such things do not happen to other men's sons," he said, when Lady Laura pleaded for her brother. Lady Laura could not induce her father to see his son, but so far prevailed that no sentence of banishment was pronounced against Lord Chiltern. There was nothing to prevent the son sitting at his father's table if he so pleased. He never did so please, —but nevertheless he continued to live in the house in Portman Square; and when he met the Earl, in the hall, perhaps, or on the staircase, would simply bow to him. Then the Earl would bow again, and shuffle on, —and look very wretched, as no doubt he was. A grown-up son must be the greatest comfort a man can have,—if he be his father's best friend; but otherwise he can hardly be a comfort. As it was in this house, the son was a constant thorn in his father's side.

"What does he do when we leave London?" Lord Brentford once said to his daughter.

"He stays here, papa."

"But he hunts still?"

"Yes, he hunts,—and he has a room somewhere at an inn,—down in Northamptonshire. But he is mostly in London. They have trains on purpose."

"What a life for my son!" said the Earl. "What a life! Of course no decent person will let him into his house." Lady Laura did not know what to say to this, for in truth Lord Chiltern was not fond of staying

at the houses of persons whom the Earl would have called decent.

General Effingham, the father of Violet, and Lord Brentford had been the closest and dearest of friends. They had been young men in the same regiment, and through life each had confided in the other. When the General's only son, then a youth of seventeen, was killed in one of our grand New Zealand wars, the bereaved father and the Earl had been together for a month in their sorrow. At that time Lord Chiltern's career had still been open to hope,—and the one man had contrasted his lot with the other. General Effingham lived long enough to hear the Earl declare that his lot was the happier of the two. Now the General was dead, and Violet, the daughter of a second wife, was all that was left of the Effinghams. This second wife had been a Miss Plummer, a lady from the City with much money, whose sister had married Lord Baldock. Violet in this way had fallen to the care of the Baldock people, and not into the hands of her father's friends. But, as the reader will have surmised, she had ideas of her own of emancipating herself from Baldock thraldom.

Twice before that last terrible affair at Newmarket, before the quarrel between the father and the son had been complete, Lord Brentford had said a word to his daughter,—merely a word,—of his son in connection with Miss Effingham.

"If he thinks of it I shall be glad to see him on the subject. You may tell him so." That had been the first word. He had just then resolved that the affair in Paris should be regarded as condoned,—as among the things to be forgotten. "She is too good for

him; but if he asks her let him tell her everything." That had been the second word, and had been spoken immediately subsequent to a payment of twelve thousand pounds made by the Earl towards the settlement of certain Doncaster accounts. Lady Laura in negotiating for the money had been very eloquent in describing some honest,—or shall we say chivalric,—sacrifice which had brought her brother into this special difficulty. Since that the Earl had declined to interest himself in his son's matrimonial affairs; and when Lady Laura had once again mentioned the matter, declaring her belief that it would be the means of saving her brother Oswald, the Earl had desired her to be silent. "Would you wish to destroy the poor child?" he had said. Nevertheless Lady Laura felt sure that if she were to go to her father with a positive statement that Oswald and Violet were engaged, he would relent and would accept Violet as his daughter. As for the payment of Lord Chiltern's present debts;—she had a little scheme of her own about that.

Miss Effingham, who had been already two days in Portman Square, had not as yet seen Lord Chiltern. She knew that he lived in the house,—that is, that he slept there, and probably eat his breakfast in some apartment of his own;—but she knew also that the habits of the house would not by any means make it necessary that they should meet. Laura and her brother probably saw each other daily,—but they never went into society together, and did not know the same sets of people. When she had announced to Lady Baldock her intention of spending the first fortnight of her London season with her friend Lady Laura, Lady

Baldock had as a matter of course—"jumped upon her," as Miss Effingham would herself call it.

"You are going to the house of the worst reprobate in all England," said Lady Baldock.

"What;—dear old Lord Brentford, whom papa loved so well!"

"I mean Lord Chiltern, who, only last year,—murdered a man!"

"That is not true, aunt."

"There is worse than that,—much worse. He is always—tipsy, and always gambling, and always—— But it is quite unfit that I should speak a word more to you about such a man as Lord Chiltern. His name ought never to be mentioned."

"Then why did you mention it, aunt?"

Lady Baldock's process of jumping upon her niece,—in which I think the aunt had generally the worst of the exercise,—went on for some time, but Violet of course carried her point.

"If she marries him there will be an end of everything," said Lady Baldock to her daughter Augusta.

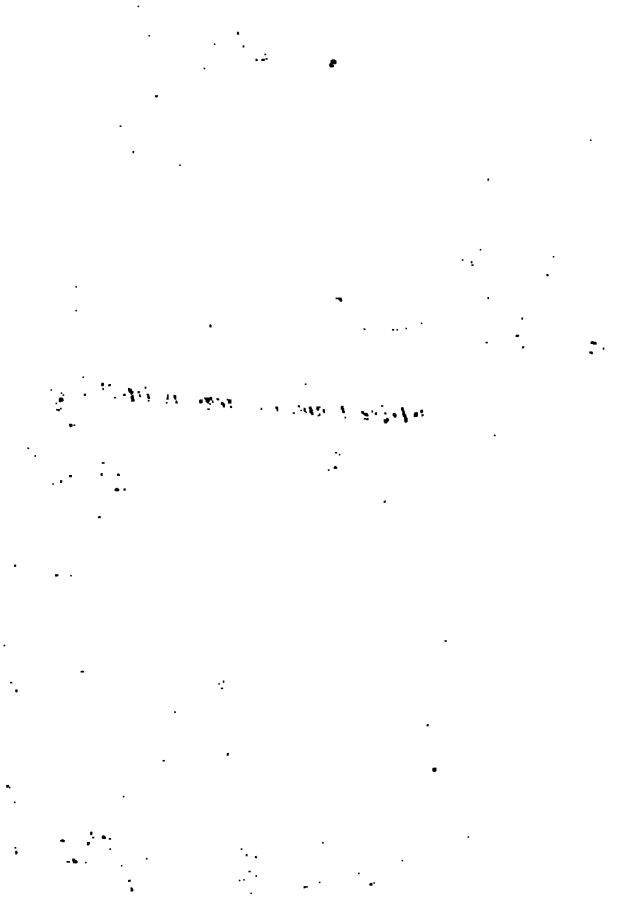
"She has more sense than that, mamma," said Augusta.

"I don't think she has any sense at all," said Lady Baldock;—"not in the least. I do wish my poor sister had lived;—I do indeed."

Lord Chiltern had now entered the room with Violet,—immediately upon that conversation between Violet and his sister as to the expediency of Violet becoming his wife. Indeed his entrance had interrupted the conversation before it was over. "I am so glad to see you, Miss Effingham," he said. "I came in thinking that I might find you."

"Here I am, as large as life."

"Here I am, as large as life."



"Here I am, as large as life," she said, getting up from her corner on the sofa and giving him her hand. "Laura and I have been discussing the affairs of the nation for the last two days, and have nearly brought our discussion to an end." She could not help looking, first at his eye and then at his hand, not as wanting evidence to the truth of the statement which his sister had made, but because the idea of a drunkard's eye and a drunkard's hand had been brought before her mind. Lord Chiltern's hand was like the hand of any other man, but there was something in his eye that almost frightened her. It looked as though he would not hesitate to wring his wife's neck round, if ever he should be brought to threaten to do so. And then his eye, like the rest of him, was red. No;—she did not think that she could ever bring herself to marry him. Why take a venture that was double-dangerous, when there were so many ventures open to her, apparently with very little of danger attached to them? "If it should ever be that I loved him, I would do it all the same," she said to herself.

"If I did not come and see you here, I suppose that I should never see you," said he, seating himself. "I do not often go to parties, and when I do you are not likely to be there."

"We might make our little arrangements for meeting," said she, laughing. "My aunt, Lady Baldock, is going to have an evening next week."

"The servants would be ordered to put me out of the house."

"Oh no. You can tell her that I invited you."

"I don't think that Oswald and Lady Baldock are great friends," said Lady Laura.

"Or he might come and take you and me to the Zoo on Sunday. That 's the proper sort of thing for a brother and a friend to do."

"I hate that place in the Regent's Park," said Lord Chiltern.

"When were you there last?" demanded Miss Effingham.

"When I came home once from Eton. But I won't go again till I can come home from Eton again." Then he altered his tone as he continued to speak. "People would look at me as if I were the wildest beast in the whole collection."

"Then," said Violet, "if you won't go to Lady Baldock's or to the Zoo, we must confine ourselves to Laura's drawing-room;—unless, indeed, you like to take me to the top of the Monument."

"I 'll take you to the top of the Monument with pleasure."

"What do you say, Laura?"

"I say that you are a foolish girl," said Lady Laura, "and that I will have nothing to do with such a scheme."

"Then there is nothing for it but that you should come here; and as you live in the house, and as I am sure to be here every morning, and as you have no possible occupation for your time, and as we have nothing particular to do with ours,—I dare say I shan't see you again before I go to my aunt's in Berkeley Square."

"Very likely not," he said.

"And why not, Oswald?" asked his sister.

He passed his hand over his face before he answered her. "Because she and I run in different grooves now, and are not such meet playfellows as we used to be

once. Do you remember my taking you away right through Saulsby Wood once on the old pony, and not bringing you back till tea-time, and Miss Blink going and telling my father?"

"Do I remember it? I think it was the happiest day in my life. His pockets were crammed full of gingerbread and Everton toffy, and we had three bottles of lemonade slung on to the pony's saddlebows. I thought it was a pity that we should ever come back."

"It was a pity," said Lord Chiltern.

"But, nevertheless, substantially necessary," said Lady Laura.

"Failing our power of reproducing the toffy, I suppose it was," said Violet.

"You were not Miss Effingham then," said Lord Chiltern.

"No,—not as yet. These disagreeable realities of life grow upon one; do they not? You took off my shoes and dried them for me at a woodman's cottage. I am obliged to put up with my maid's doing those things now. And Miss Blink the mild is changed for Lady Baldock the martinet. And if I rode about with you in a wood all day I should be sent to Coventry instead of to bed. And so you see everything is changed as well as my name."

"Everything is not changed," said Lord Chiltern, getting up from his seat. "I am not changed,—at least not in this, that as I then loved you better than any being in the world,—better even than Laura there,—so do I love you now infinitely the best of all. Do not look so surprised at me. You knew it before as well as you do now;—and Laura knows it. There is no secret to be kept in the matter among us three."

"But, Lord Chiltern,—" said Miss Effingham, rising also to her feet, and then pausing, not knowing how to answer him. There had been a suddenness in his mode of addressing her which had, so to say, almost taken away her breath; and then to be told by a man of his love before his sister was in itself, to her, a matter so surprising, that none of those words came at her command which will come, as though by instinct, to young ladies on such occasions.

"You have known it always," said he, as though he were angry with her.

"Lord Chiltern," she replied, "you must excuse me if I say that you are, at the least, very abrupt. I did not think when I was going back so joyfully to our old childish days that you would turn the tables on me in this way."

"He has said nothing that ought to make you angry," said Lady Laura.

"Only because he has driven me to say that which will make me appear to be uncivil to himself. Lord Chiltern, I do not love you with that love of which you are speaking now. As an old friend I have always regarded you, and I hope that I may always do so." Then she got up and left the room.

"Why were you so sudden with her,—so abrupt,—so loud?" said his sister, coming up to him and taking him by the arm almost in anger.

"It would make no difference," said he. "She does not care for me."

"It makes all the difference in the world," said Lady Laura. "Such a woman as Violet cannot be had after that fashion. You must begin again."

"I have begun and ended," he said.

"That is nonsense. Of course you will persist. It was madness to speak in that way to-day. You may be sure of this, however, that there is no one she likes better than you. You must remember that you have done much to make any girl afraid of you."

"I do remember it."

"Do something now to make her fear you no longer. Speak to her softly. Tell her of the sort of life which you would live with her. Tell her that all is changed. As she comes to love you, she will believe you when she would believe no one else on that matter."

"Am I to tell her a lie?" said Lord Chiltern, looking his sister full in the face. Then he turned upon his heel and left her.

CHAPTER XII.

AUTUMNAL PROSPECTS.

THE session went on very calmly after the opening battle which ousted Lord De Terrier and sent Mr. Mildmay back to the Treasury,—so calmly that Phineas Finn was unconsciously disappointed, as lacking that excitement of contest to which he had been introduced in the first days of his parliamentary career. From time to time certain waspish attacks were made by Mr. Daubeny, now on this Secretary of State and now on that; but they were felt by both parties to mean nothing; and as no great measure was brought forward, nothing which would serve by the magnitude of its interests to divide the liberal side of the House into fractions, Mr. Mildmay's Cabinet was allowed to hold its own in comparative peace and quiet. It was now July,—the middle of July,—and the member for Loughshane had not yet addressed the House. How often had he meditated doing so; how he had composed his speeches walking round the Park on his way down to the House; how he got his subjects up, —only to find on hearing them discussed that he really knew little or nothing about them; how he had his arguments and almost his very words taken out of his mouth by some other member; and lastly, how he had actually been deterred from getting upon his legs by a certain tremor of blood round his heart when the moment for rising had come,—of all this he never said a

word to any man. Since that last journey to county Mayo, Laurence Fitzgibbon had been his most intimate friend, but he said nothing of all this even to Laurence Fitzgibbon. To his other friend, Lady Laura Standish, he did explain something of his feelings, not absolutely describing to her the extent of hindrance to which his modesty had subjected him, but letting her know that he had his qualms as well as his aspirations. But as Lady Laura always recommended patience, and more than once expressed her opinion that a young member would be better to sit in silence at least for one session, he was not driven to the mortification of feeling that he was incurring her contempt by his bashfulness. As regarded the men among whom he lived I think he was almost annoyed at finding that no one seemed to expect that he should speak. Barrington Erle, when he had first talked of sending Phineas down to Loughshane, had predicted for him all manner of parliamentary successes, and had expressed the warmest admiration of the manner in which Phineas had discussed this or that subject at the Union. "We have not above one or two men in the House who can do that kind of thing," Barrington Erle had once said. But now no allusions whatever were made to his powers of speech, and Phineas in his modest moments began to be more amazed than ever that he should find himself seated in that chamber.

To the forms and technicalities of parliamentary business he did give close attention, and was unremitting in his attendance. On one or two occasions he ventured to ask a question of the Speaker, and as the words of experience fell into his ears, he would tell himself that he was going through his education,—that

he was learning to be a working member, and perhaps to be a statesman. But his regrets with reference to Mr. Low and the dingy chambers in Old Square were very frequent; and had it been possible for him to undo all that he had done, he would often have abandoned to some one else the honour of representing the electors of Loughshane.

But he was supported in all his difficulties by the kindness of his friend, Lady Laura Standish. He was often in the house in Portman Square, and was always received with cordiality,—and, as he thought, almost with affection. She would sit and talk to him, sometimes saying a word about her brother and sometimes about her father, as though there were more between them than the casual intimacy of London acquaintance. And in Portman Square he had been introduced to Miss Effingham, and had found Miss Effingham to be —very nice. Miss Effingham had quite taken to him, and he had danced with her at two or three parties, talking always, as he did so, about Lady Laura Standish.

"I declare, Laura, I think your friend Mr. Finn is in love with you," said Violet to Lady Laura one night.

"I don't think that. He is fond of me, and so am I of him. He is so honest, and so naïve without being awkward! And then he is undoubtedly clever."

"And so uncommonly handsome," said Violet.

"I don't know that that makes much difference," said Lady Laura.

"I think it does if a man looks like a gentleman as well."

"Mr. Finn certainly looks like a gentleman," said Lady Laura.

"And no doubt is one," said Violet. "I wonder whether he has got any money."

"Not a penny, I should say."

"How does such a man manage to live? There are so many men like that, and they are always mysteries to me. I suppose he 'll have to marry an heiress."

"Whoever gets him will not have a bad husband," said Lady Laura Standish.

Phineas during the summer had very often met Mr. Kennedy. They sat on the same side of the House, they belonged to the same club, they dined together more than once in Portman Square, and on one occasion Phineas had accepted an invitation to dinner sent to him by Mr. Kennedy himself. "A slower affair I never saw in my life," he said afterwards to Laurence Fitzgibbon. "Though there were two or three men there who talk everywhere else, they could not talk at his table." "He gave you good wine, I should say," said Fitzgibbon, "and let me tell you that that covers a multitude of sins." In spite, however, of all these opportunities for intimacy, now, nearly at the end of the session, Phineas had hardly spoken a dozen words to Mr. Kennedy, and really knew nothing whatsoever of the man, as one friend,—or even as one acquaintance knows another. Lady Laura had desired him to be on good terms with Mr. Kennedy, and for that reason he had dined with him. Nevertheless he disliked Mr. Kennedy, and felt quite sure that Mr. Kennedy disliked him. He was therefore rather surprised when he received the following note:—

"Albany, Z 3, July 17, 186—.

"My dear Mr. Finn,—I shall have some friends at Loughlinter next month, and should be very glad if you

will join us. I will name the 16th August. I don't know whether you shoot, but there are grouse and deer.

"Yours truly,

"ROBERT KENNEDY."

What was he to do? He had already begun to feel rather uncomfortable at the prospect of being separated from all his new friends as soon as the session should be over. Laurence Fitzgibbon had asked him to make another visit to county Mayo, but that he had declined. Lady Laura had said something to him about going abroad with her brother, and since that there had sprung up a sort of intimacy between him and Lord Chiltern; but nothing had been fixed about this foreign trip, and there were pecuniary objections to it which put it almost out of his power. The Christmas holidays he would of course pass with his family at Killaloe, but he hardly liked the idea of hurrying off to Killaloe immediately the session should be over. Everybody around him seemed to be looking forward to pleasant leisure doings in the country. Men talked about grouse, and of the ladies at the houses to which they were going and of the people whom they were to meet. Lady Laura had said nothing of her own movements for the early autumn, and no invitation had come to him to go to the Earl's country house. He had already felt that every one would depart and that he would be left,—and this had made him uncomfortable. What was he to do with the invitation from Mr. Kennedy? He disliked the man, and had told himself half-a-dozen times that he despised him. Of course he must refuse it. Even for the sake of the scenery, and the grouse, and the pleasant party, and the feeling that going to

Loughlinter in August would be the proper sort of thing to do, he must refuse it! But it occurred to him at last that he would call in Portman Square before he wrote his note.

"Of course you will go," said Lady Laura, in her most decided tone.

"And why?"

"In the first place it is civil in him to ask you, and why should you be uncivil in return?"

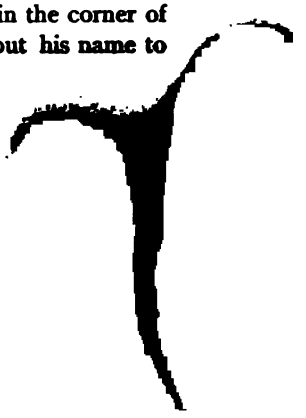
"There is nothing uncivil in not accepting a man's invitation," said Phineas.

"We are going," said Lady Laura, "and I can only say that I shall be disappointed if you do not go too. Both Mr. Gresham and Mr. Monk will be there, and I believe they have never stayed together in the same house before. I have no doubt there are a dozen men on your side of the House who would give their eyes to be there. Of course you will go."

Of course he did go. The note accepting Mr. Kennedy's invitation was written at the Reform Club within a quarter of an hour of his leaving Portman Square. He was very careful in writing to be not more familiar or more civil than Mr. Kennedy had been to himself, and then he signed himself "Yours truly, Phineas Finn." But another proposition was made to him, and a most charming proposition, during the few minutes that he remained in Portman Square. "I am so glad," said Lady Laura, "because I can now ask you to run down to us at Saulsby for a couple of days on your way to Loughlinter. Till this was fixed I could n't ask you to come all the way to Saulsby for two days; and there won't be room for more between our leaving London and starting to Loughlinter." Phineas swore that he

would have gone if it had been but for one hour, and if Saulsby had been twice the distance. "Very well; come on the 13th and go on the 15th. You must go on the 15th, unless you choose to stay with the housekeeper. And remember, Mr. Finn, we have got no grouse at Saulsby." Phineas declared that he did not care a straw for grouse.

There was another little occurrence which happened before Phineas left London, and which was not altogether so charming as his prospects at Saulsby and Loughlinter. Early in August, when the session was still incomplete, he dined with Laurence Fitzgibbon at the Reform Club. Laurence had specially invited him to do so, and made very much of him on the occasion. "By George, my dear fellow," Laurence said to him that morning, "nothing has happened to me this session that has given me so much pleasure as your being in the House. Of course there are fellows with whom one is very intimate and of whom one is very fond,—and all that sort of thing. But most of these Englishmen on our side are such cold fellows; or else they are like Rattler and Barrington Erle, thinking of nothing but politics. And then as to our own men, there are so many of them one can hardly trust! That 's the truth of it. Your being in the House has been such a comfort to me!" Phineas, who really liked his friend Laurence, expressed himself very warmly in answer to this, and became affectionate, and made sundry protestations of friendship which were perfectly sincere. Their sincerity was tested after dinner, when Fitzgibbon, as they two were seated on a sofa in the corner of the smoking-room, asked Phineas to put his name to



the back of a bill for two hundred and fifty pounds at six months' date.

"But, my dear Laurence," said Phineas, "two hundred and fifty pounds is a sum of money utterly beyond my reach."

"Exactly, my dear boy, and that 's why I 've come to you. D' ye think I 'd have asked anybody who by any impossibility might have been made to pay anything for me?"

"But what 's the use of it then?"

"All the use in the world. It 's for me to judge of the use, you know. Why, d' ye think I 'd ask it if it was n't of use? I 'll make it of use, my boy. And take my word, you 'll never hear about it again. It 's just a forestalling of my salary; that 's all. I would n't do it till I saw that we were at least safe for six months to come." Then Phineas Finn with many misgivings, with much inward hatred of himself for his own weakness, did put his name on the back of the bill which Laurence Fitzgibbon had prepared for his signature.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAULSBY WOOD.

"So you won't come to Moydrum again?" said Laurence Fitzgibbon to his friend.

"Not this autumn, Laurence. Your father would think that I want to live there."

"Bedad, it 's my father would be glad to see you,—and the oftener the better."

"The fact is, my time is filled up."

"You 're not going to be one of the party at Loughlinter?"

"I believe I am. Kennedy asked me, and people seem to think that everybody is to do what he bids them."

"I should think so too. I wish he had asked me. I should have thought it as good as a promise of an under-secretaryship. All the Cabinet are to be there. I don't suppose he ever had an Irishman in his house before. When do you start?"

"Well;—on the 12th or 13th. I believe I shall go to Saulsby on my way."

"The devil you will. Upon my word, Phineas, my boy, you 're the luckiest fellow I know. This is your first year, and you 're asked to the two most difficult houses in England. You have only to look out for an heiress now. There is little Vi Effingham;—she is sure to be at Saulsby. Good-bye, old fellow. Don't

you be in the least unhappy about the bill. I 'll see to making that all right."

Phineas was rather unhappy about the bill; but there was so much that was pleasant in his cup at the present moment, that he resolved, as far as possible, to ignore the bitter of that one ingredient. He was a little in the dark as to two or three matters respecting these coming visits. He would have liked to have taken a servant with him; but he had no servant, and felt ashamed to hire one for the occasion. And then he was in trouble about a gun, and the paraphernalia of shooting. He was not a bad shot at snipe in the bogs of county Clare, but he had never even seen a gun used in England. However, he bought himself a gun,—with other paraphernalia, and took a license for himself, and then groaned over the expense to which he found that his journey would subject him. And at last he hired a servant for the occasion. He was intensely ashamed of himself when he had done so, hating himself, and telling himself that he was going to the devil headlong. And why had he done it? Not that Lady Laura would like him the better, or that she would care whether he had a servant or not. She probably would know nothing of his servant. But the people about her would know, and he was foolishly anxious that the people about her should think that he was worthy of her.

Then he called on Mr. Low before he started. "I did not like to leave London without seeing you," he said; "but I know you will have nothing pleasant to say to me."

"I shall say nothing unpleasant certainly. I see your name in the divisions, and I feel a sort of envy myself."

CHAPTER XIII

SALARY WORK.

"So, you won't come to Moydrum again?" said Laurence Fitzgibbon to his friend.

"Not this autumn, Laurence. Your father would think that I want to live there."

"Indeed, it 's my father would be glad to see you,—and the oftener the better."

"The fact is, my time is filled up."

"You 're not going to be one of the party at Loughlinter?"

"I believe I am. Kennedy asked me, and people seem to think that everybody is to do what he bids them."

"I should think so too. I wish he had asked me. I should have thought it as good as a promise of an under secretaryship. All the Cabinet are to be there. I don't suppose he ever had an Irishman in his house before. When do you start?"

"Well, on the 12th or 13th. I believe I shall go to Scudsby on my way."

"The devil you will. Upon my word, Phineas, my boy, you 're the luckiest fellow I know. This is your first year, and you 're asked to the two most difficult houses in England. You have only to look out for an heiress now. There 's little Vi Effingham—she 's sure to be at Scudsby. Good-bye, old fellow. Don't

"Any fool could go into a lobby," said Phineas.

"To tell you the truth, I have been gratified to see that you have had the patience to abstain from speaking till you have looked about you. It was more than I expected from your hot Irish blood. Going to meet Mr. Gresham and Mr. Monk,—are you? Well, I hope you may meet them in the Cabinet some day. Mind you come and see me when Parliament meets in February."

Mrs. Bunce was delighted when she found that Phineas had hired a servant; but Mr. Bunce predicted nothing but evil from so vain an expense. "Don't tell me; where is it to come from? He ain't no richer because he 's in Parliament. There ain't no wages. M.P. and M.T.,"—whereby Mr. Bunce, I fear, meant empty,—"are pretty much alike when a man has n't a fortune at his back."

"But he 's going to stay with all the lords in the Cabinet," said Mrs. Bunce, to whom Phineas, in his pride, had confided perhaps more than was necessary.

"Cabinet, indeed," said Bunce; "if he 'd stick to chambers, and let alone cabinets, he 'd do a deal better. Given up his rooms, has he,—till February? He don't expect we 're going to keep them empty for him!"

Phineas found that the house was full at Saulsby, although the sojourn of the visitors would necessarily be so short. There were three or four there on their way on to Loughlinter, like himself,—Mr. Bonteen and Mr. Rattler, with Mr. Palliser, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and his wife,—and there was Violet Effingham, who, however, was not going to Loughlinter. "No, indeed," she said to our hero, who on the first evening had the pleasure of taking her in to dinner,

"unfortunately I have n't a seat in Parliament, and therefore I am not asked."

"Lady Laura is going."

"Yes;—but Lady Laura has a Cabinet Minister in her keeping. I 've only one comfort;—you 'll be awfully dull."

"I dare say it would be very much nicer to stay here," said Phineas.

"If you want to know my real mind," said Violet, "I would give one of my little fingers to go. There will be four Cabinet Ministers in the house, and four un-Cabinet Ministers, and half-a-dozen other members of Parliament, and there will be Lady Glencora Palliser, who is the best fun in the world; and, in point of fact, it 's the thing of the year. But I am not asked. You see I belong to the Baldock faction, and we don't sit on your side of the House. Mr. Kennedy thinks that I should tell secrets."

Why on earth had Mr. Kennedy invited him, Phineas Finn, to meet four Cabinet Ministers and Lady Glencora Palliser? He could only have done so at the instance of Lady Laura Standish. It was delightful for Phineas to think that Lady Laura cared for him so deeply; but it was not equally delightful when he remembered how very close must be the alliance between Mr. Kennedy and Lady Laura, when she was thus powerful with him.

At Saulsby Phineas did not see much of his hostess. When they were making their plans for the one entire day of this visit, she said a soft word of apology to him. "I am so busy with all these people, that I hardly know what I am doing. But we shall be able to find a quiet minute or two at Loughlinter,—unless, indeed, you

intend to be on the mountains all day. I suppose you have brought a gun like everybody else?"

"Yes;—I have brought a gun. I do shoot; but I am not an inveterate sportsman."

On that one day there was a great riding party made up, and Phineas found himself mounted, after luncheon, with some dozen other equestrians. Among them were Miss Effingham and Lady Glencora, Mr. Rattler and the Earl of Brentford himself. Lady Glencora, whose husband was, as has been said, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and who was still a young woman, and a very pretty woman, had taken lately very strongly to politics, which she discussed among men and women of both parties with something more than ordinary audacity. "What a nice happy, lazy, time you 've had of it since you 've been in," said she to the Earl.

"I hope we have been more happy than lazy," said the Earl.

"But you 've done nothing. Mr. Palliser has twenty schemes of reform, all mature; but among you you 've not let him bring in one of them. The Duke and Mr. Mildmay and you will break his heart among you."

"Poor Mr. Palliser!"

"The truth is, if you don't take care he and Mr. Monk and Mr. Gresham will arise and shake themselves, and turn you all out."

"We must look to ourselves, Lady Glencora."

"Indeed, yes;—or you will be known to all posterity as the fainéant Government."

"Let me tell you, Lady Glencora, that a fainéant Government is not the worst government that England can have. It has been the great fault of our politicians that they have all wanted to do something."

"Mr. Mildmay is at any rate innocent of that charge," said Lady Glencora.

They were now riding through a vast wood, and Phineas found himself delightfully established by the side of Violet Effingham. "Mr. Rattler has been explaining to me that he must have nineteen next session. Now, if I were you, Mr. Finn, I would decline to be counted up in that way as one of Mr. Rattler's sheep."

"But what am I to do?"

"Do something on your own hook. You men in Parliament are so much like sheep! If one jumps at a gap, all go after him,—and then you are penned into lobbies, and then you are fed, and then you are fleeced. I wish I were in Parliament. I 'd get up in the middle and make such a speech. You all seem to me to be so much afraid of one another that you don't quite dare to speak out. Do you see that cottage there?"

"What a pretty cottage it is!"

"Yes;—is it not? Twelve years ago I took off my shoes and stockings and had them dried in that cottage, and when I got back to the house I was put to bed for having been out all day in the wood."

"Were you wandering about alone?"

"No, I was n't alone. Oswald Standish was with me. We were children then. Do you know him?"

"Lord Chiltern;—yes, I know him. He and I have been rather friends this year."

"He is very good;—is he not?"

"Good,—in what way?"

"Honest and generous!"

"I know no man whom I believe to be more so."

"And he is clever?" asked Miss Effingham.

"Very clever. That is, he talks very well if you

will let him talk after his own fashion. You would always fancy that he was going to eat you;—but that is his way."

"And you like him?"

"Very much."

"I am so glad to hear you say so."

"Is he a favourite of yours, Miss Effingham?"

"Not now,—not particularly. I hardly ever see him. But his sister is the best friend I have, and I used to like him so much when he was a boy! I have not seen that cottage since that day, and I remember it as though it were yesterday. Lord Chiltern is quite changed, is he not?"

"Changed,—in what way?"

"They used to say that he was—unsteady, you know."

"I think he is changed. But Chiltern is at heart a Bohemian. It is impossible not to see that at once. He hates the decencies of life."

"I suppose he does," said Violet. "He ought to marry. If he were married, that would all be cured;—don't you think so?"

"I cannot fancy him with a wife," said Phineas. "There is a savagery about him which would make him an uncomfortable companion for a woman."

"But he would love his wife?"

"Yes, as he does his horses. And he would treat her well,—as he does his horses. But he expects every horse he has to do anythi[illegible] that any horse can do; and he would expect t[illegible] of his wife."

Phin[illegible] h[illegible] ow deep an injury he might be doing [illegible] description, nor did it once occur to [illegible] thinking of her-

self as the possible wife of this Red Indian. Miss Effingham rode on in silence for some distance, and then she said but one word more about Lord Chiltern. "He was so good to me in that cottage."

On the following day the party at Saulsby was broken up, and there was a regular pilgrimage towards Loughlinter. Phineas resolved upon sleeping a night at Edinburgh on his way, and he found himself joined in the bands of close companionship with Mr. Rattler for the occasion. The evening was by no means thrown away, for he learned much of his trade from Mr. Rattler. And Mr. Rattler was heard to declare afterwards at Loughlinter that Mr. Finn was a pleasant young man.

It soon came to be admitted by all who knew Phineas Finn that he had a peculiar power of making himself agreeable which no one knew how to analyse or define. "I think it is because he listens so well," said one man. "But the women would not like him for that," said another. "He has studied when to listen and when to talk," said a third. The truth, however, was, that Phineas Finn had made no study in the matter at all. It was simply his nature to be pleasant.

CHAPTER XIV.

LOUGHLINTER.

PHINEAS FINN reached Loughlinter together with Mr. Rattler in a post-chaise from the neighbouring town. Mr. Rattler, who had done this kind of thing very often before, travelled without impediments, but the new servant of our hero's was stuck outside with the driver, and was in the way. "I never bring a man with me," said Mr. Rattler to his young friend. "The servants of the house like it much better, because they get feed; you are just as well waited on, and it don't cost half as much." Phineas blushed as he heard all this; but there was the impediment, not to be got rid of for the nonce, and Phineas made the best of his attendant. "It 's one of those points," said he, "as to which a man never quite makes up his mind. If you bring a fellow, you wish you had n't brought him; and if you don't, you wish you had." "I 'm a great deal more decided in my ways than that," said Mr. Rattler.

Loughlinter, as they approached it, seemed to Phineas to be a much finer place than Saulsby. And so it was, except that Loughlinter wanted that graceful beauty of age which Saulsby possessed. Loughlinter was all of cut stone, but the stones had been cut only yesterday. It stood on a gentle slope, with a greensward falling from the front entrance down to a mountain lake. And on the other side of the Lough there

rose a mighty mountain to the skies, Ben Linter. At the foot of it, and all round to the left, there ran the woods of Linter, stretching for miles through crags and bogs and mountain lands. No better ground for deer than the side of Ben Linter was there in all those highlands. And the Linter, rushing down into the Lough through rocks which, in some places, almost met together above its waters, ran so near to the house that the pleasant noise of its cataracts could be heard from the hall door. Behind the house the expanse of drained park land seemed to be interminable; and then, again, came the mountains. There were Ben Linn and Ben Lody;—and the whole territory belonging to Mr. Kennedy. He was Laird of Linn and Laird of Linter, as his people used to say. And yet his father had walked into Glasgow as a little boy,—no doubt with the normal half-crown in his breeches pocket.

"Magnificent;—is it not?" said Phineas to the Treasury Secretary, as they were being driven up to the door.

"Very grand;—but the young trees show the new man. A new man may buy a forest; but he can't get park trees."

Phineas, at the moment, was thinking how far all these things which he saw, the mountains stretching everywhere around him, the castle, the lake, the river, the wealth of it all, and, more than the wealth, the nobility of the beauty, might act as temptations to Lady Laura Standish. If a woman were asked to have the half of all this, would it be possible that she should prefer to take the half of his nothing? He thought it might be possible for a girl who would confess, or seem to confess, that love should be everything. But it

could hardly be possible for a woman who looked at the world almost as a man looked at it,—as an oyster to be opened with such weapon as she could find ready to her hand. Lady Laura professed to have a care for all the affairs of the world. She loved politics, and could talk of social science, and had broad ideas about religion, and was devoted to certain educational views. Such a woman would feel that wealth was necessary to her, and would be willing, for the sake of wealth, to put up with a husband without romance. Nay; might it not be that she would prefer a husband without romance? Thus Phineas was arguing to himself as he was driven up to the door of Loughlinter Castle, while Mr. Rattler was eloquent on the beauty of old park trees. "After all, a Scotch forest is a very scrubby sort of thing," said Mr. Rattler.

There was nobody in the house,—at least, they found nobody; and within half an hour Phineas was walking about the grounds by himself. Mr. Rattler had declared himself to be delighted at having an opportunity of writing letters,—and no doubt was writing them by the dozen, all dated from Loughlinter, and all detailing the facts that Mr. Gresham, and Mr. Monk, and Plantagenet Palliser, and Lord Brentford were in the same house with him. Phineas had no letters to write, and therefore rushed down across the broad lawn to the river, of which he heard the noisy tumbling waters. There was something in the air which immediately filled him with high spirits; and, in his desire to investigate the glories of the place, he forgot that he was going to dine with four Cabinet Ministers in a row. He soon reached the stream, and began to make his way up it through the ravine. There was waterfall

over waterfall, and there were little bridges here and there which looked to be half natural and half artificial, and a path which required that you should climb, but which was yet a path, and all was so arranged that not a pleasant splashing rush of the waters was lost to the visitor. He went on and on, up the stream, till there was a sharp turn in the ravine, and then, looking upwards, he saw above his head a man and a woman standing together on one of the little half-made wooden bridges. His eyes were sharp, and he saw at a glance that the woman was Lady Laura Standish. He had not recognised the man, but he had very little doubt that it was Mr. Kennedy. Of course it was Mr. Kennedy, because he would prefer that it should be any other man under the sun. He would have turned back at once if he had thought that he could have done so without being observed; but he felt sure that, standing as they were, they must have observed him. He did not like to join them. He would not intrude himself. So he remained still, and began to throw stones into the river. But he had not thrown above a stone or two when he was called from above. He looked up, and then he perceived that the man who called him was his host. Of course it was Mr. Kennedy. Thereupon he ceased to throw stones, and went up the path, and joined them upon the bridge. Mr. Kennedy stepped forward, and bade him welcome to Loughlinter. His manner was less cold, and he seemed to have more words at command than was usual with him. "You have not been long," he said, "in finding out the most beautiful spot about the place."

"Is it not lovely?" said Laura. "We have not

been here an hour yet, and Mr. Kennedy insisted on bringing me here."

"It is wonderfully beautiful," said Phineas.

"It is this very spot where we now stand that made me build the house where it is," said Mr. Kennedy, "and I was only eighteen when I stood here and made up my mind. That is just twenty-five years ago." "So he is forty-three," said Phineas to himself, thinking how glorious it was to be only twenty-five. "And within twelve months," continued Mr. Kennedy, "the foundations were being dug and the stone-cutters were at work."

"What a good-natured man your father must have been," said Lady Laura.

"He had nothing else to do with his money but to pour it over my head, as it were. I don't think he had any other enjoyment of it himself. Will you go a little higher, Lady Laura? We shall get a fine view over to Ben Linn just now." Lady Laura declared that she would go as much higher as he chose to take her, and Phineas was rather in doubt as to what it would become him to do. He would stay where he was, or go down, or make himself to vanish after any most acceptable fashion; but if he were to do so abruptly it would seem as though he were attributing something special to the companionship of the other two. Mr. Kennedy saw his doubt, and asked him to join them. "You may as well come on, Mr. Finn. We don't dine till eight, and it is not much past six yet. The men of business are all writing letters, and the ladies who have been travelling are in bed, I believe."

"Not all of them, Mr. Kennedy," said Lady Laura. Then they went on with their walk very pleasantly,

and the lord of all that they surveyed took them from one point of vantage to another, till they both swore that of all spots upon the earth Loughlinter was surely the most lovely. "I do delight in it, I own," said the lord. "When I come up here alone, and feel that in the midst of this little bit of a crowded island I have all this to myself,—all this with which no other man's wealth can interfere,—I grow proud of my own, till I become thoroughly ashamed of myself. After all, I believe it is better to dwell in cities than in the country,—better, at any rate, for a rich man." Mr. Kennedy had now spoken more words than Phineas had heard to fall from his lips during the whole time that they had been acquainted with each other.

"I believe so too," said Laura, "if one were obliged to choose between the two. For myself, I think that a little of both is good for man and woman."

"There is no doubt about that," said Phineas.

"No doubt as far as enjoyment goes," said Mr. Kennedy.

He took them up out of the ravine on to the side of the mountain, and then down by another path through the woods to the back of the house. As they went he relapsed into his usual silence, and the conversation was kept up between the other two. At a point not very far from the castle,—just so far that one could see by the break of the ground where the castle stood, Kennedy left them. "Mr. Finn will take you back in safety, I am sure," said he, "and, as I am here, I 'll go up to the farm for a moment. If I don't show myself now and again when I am here, they think I 'm indifferent about the 'bestials.'"

"Now, Mr. Kennedy," said Lady Laura, "you are

going to pretend to understand all about sheep and oxen." Mr. Kennedy, owning that it was so, went away to his farm, and Phineas with Lady Laura returned towards the house. "I think, upon the whole," said Lady Laura, "that that is as good a man as I know."

"I should think he is an idle one," said Phineas.

"I doubt that. He is, perhaps, neither zealous nor active. But he is thoughtful and high-principled, and has a method and a purpose in the use which he makes of his money. And you see that he has poetry in his nature too, if you get him upon the right string. How fond he is of the scenery of this place!"

"Any man would be fond of that. I 'm ashamed to say that it almost makes me envy him. I certainly never have wished to be Mr. Robert Kennedy in London, but I should like to be the Laird of Loughlinter."

"'Laird of Linn and Laird of Linter,—Here in summer, gone in winter.' There is some ballad about the old lairds; but that belongs to a time when Mr. Kennedy had not been heard of, when some branch of the Mackenzies lived down at that wretched old tower which you see as you first come upon the lake. When old Mr. Kennedy bought it there were hardly a hundred acres on the property under cultivation."

"And it belonged to the Mackenzies."

"Yes;—to the Mackenzie of Linn, as he was called. It was Mr. Kennedy, the old man, who was first called Loughlinter. That is Linn Castle, and they lived there for hundreds of years. But these Highlanders, with all that is said of their family pride, have forgotten the Mackenzies already, and are quite proud of their rich landlord."

"That is unpoetical," said Phineas.

"Yes;—but then poetry is so usually false. I doubt whether Scotland would not have been as prosaic a country as any under the sun but for Walter Scott;—and I have no doubt that Henry V. owes the romance of his character altogether to Shakspeare."

"I sometimes think you despise poetry," said Phineas.

"When it is false I do. The difficulty is to know when it is false and when it is true. Tom Moore was always false."

"Not so false as Byron," said Phineas with energy.

"Much more so, my friend. But we will not discuss that now. Have you seen Mr. Monk since you have been here?"

"I have seen no one. I came with Mr. Rattler."

"Why with Mr. Rattler? You cannot find Mr. Rattler a companion much to your taste."

"Chance brought us together. But Mr. Rattler is a man of sense, Lady Laura, and is not to be despised."

"It always seems to me," said Lady Laura, "that nothing is to be gained in politics by sitting at the feet of the little Gamaliels."

"But the great Gamaliels will not have a novice on their footstools."

"Then sit at no man's feet. Is it not astonishing that the price generally put upon any article by the world is that which the owner puts on it?—and that this is specially true of a man's own self? If you herd with Rattler, men will take it for granted that you are a Rattlerite, and no more. If you consort with Greshams and Pallisers, you will equally be supposed to know your own place."

"I never knew a Mentor," said Phineas, "so apt as you are to fill his Telemachus with pride."

"It is because I do not think your fault lies that way. If it did, or if I thought so, my Telemachus, you may be sure that I should resign my position as Mentor. Here are Mr. Kennedy and Lady Glencora and Mrs. Gresham on the steps." Then they went up through the Ionic columns on to the broad stone terrace before the door, and there they found a crowd of men and women. For the legislators and statesmen had written their letters, and the ladies had taken their necessary rest.

Phineas, as he was dressing, considered deeply all that Lady Laura had said to him,—not so much with reference to the advice which she had given him, though that also was of importance, as to the fact that it had been given by her. She had first called herself his Mentor; but he had accepted the name and had addressed her as her Telemachus. And yet he believed himself to be older than she,—if, indeed, there was any difference in their ages. And was it possible that a female Mentor should have her Telemachus,—should love him as Phineas desired to be loved by Lady Laura? He would not say that it was impossible. Perhaps there had been mistakes between them;—a mistake in his manner of addressing her, and another in hers of addressing him. Perhaps the old bachelor of forty-three was not thinking of a wife. Had this old bachelor of forty-three been really in love with Lady Laura, would he have allowed her to walk home alone with Phineas, leaving her with some flimsy pretext of having to look at his sheep? Phineas resolved that he must at any rate play out his game,—whether

he were to lose it or to win it; and in playing it he must, if possible, drop something of that Mentor and Telemachus style of conversation. As to the advice given him of herding with Greshams and Pallisers, instead of with Rattlers and Fitzgibbons,—he must use that as circumstances might direct. To him, himself, as he thought of it all, it was sufficiently astonishing that even the Rattlers and Fitzgibbons should admit him among them as one of themselves. "When I think of my father and of the old house at Killaloe, and remember that hitherto I have done nothing myself, I cannot understand how it is that I should be at Loughlinter." There was only one way of understanding it. If Lady Laura really loved him, the riddle might be read.

The rooms at Loughlinter were splendid, much larger and very much more richly furnished than those at Saulsby. But there was a certain stiffness in the movement of things, and perhaps in the manner of some of those present, which was not felt at Saulsby. Phineas at once missed the grace and prettiness and cheery audacity of Violet Effingham, and felt at the same time that Violet Effingham would be out of her element at Loughlinter. At Loughlinter they were met for business. It was at least a semi-political, or perhaps rather a semi-official gathering, and he became aware that he ought not to look simply for amusement. When he entered the drawing-room before dinner, Mr. Monk and Mr. Palliser, and Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Gresham, with sundry others, were standing in a wide group before the fireplace, and among them were Lady Glencora Palliser and Lady Laura and Mrs. Bonteen. As he approached them it seemed as though a sort

of opening was made for himself; but he could see, though others did not, that the movement came from Lady Laura.

"I believe, Mr. Monk," said Lady Glencora, "that you and I are the only two in the whole party who really know what we would be at."

"If I must be divided from so many of my friends," said Mr. Monk, "I am happy to go astray in the company of Lady Glencora Palliser."

"And might I ask," said Mr. Gresham, with a peculiar smile for which he was famous, "what it is that you and Mr. Monk are really at?"

"Making men and women all equal," said Lady Glencora. "That I take to be the gist of our political theory."

"Lady Glencora, I must cry off," said Mr. Monk.

"Yes;—no doubt. If I were in the Cabinet myself I should not admit so much. There are reticences,—of course. And there is an official discretion."

"But you don't mean to say, Lady Glencora, that you would really advocate equality?" said Mrs. Bonteen.

"I do mean to say so, Mrs. Bonteen. And I mean to go further, and to tell you that you are no liberal at heart unless you do so likewise; unless that is the basis of your political aspirations."

"Pray let me speak for myself, Lady Glencora."

"By no means,—not when you are criticising me and my politics. Do you not wish to make the lower orders comfortable?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Bonteen.

"And educated, and happy and good?"

"Undoubtedly."

"To make them as comfortable and as good as yourself?"

"Better if possible."

"And I 'm sure you wish to make yourself as good and as comfortable as anybody else,—as those above you, if anybody is above you? You will admit that?"

"Yes;—if I understand you."

"Then you have admitted everything, and are an advocate for general equality,—just as Mr. Monk is, and as I am. There is no getting out of it;—is there Mr. Kennedy?" Then dinner was announced, and Mr. Kennedy walked off with the French republican on his arm. As she went, she whispered into Mr. Kennedy's ear, "You will understand me. I am not saying that people are equal; but that the tendency of all law-making and of all governing should be to reduce the inequalities." In answer to which Mr. Kennedy said not a word. Lady Glencora's politics were too fast and furious for his nature.

A week passed by at Loughlinter, at the end of which Phineas found himself on terms of friendly intercourse with all the political magnates assembled in the house, but especially with Mr. Monk. He had determined that he would not follow Lady Laura's advice as to his selection of companions, if in doing so he should be driven even to a seeming of intrusion. He made no attempt to sit at the feet of anybody, and would stand aloof when bigger men than himself were talking, and was content to be less,—as indeed he was less,—than Mr. Bonteen or Mr. Rattler. But at the end of a week he found that, without any effort on his part,—almost in opposition to efforts on his part,—he had fallen into an easy pleasant way with these men which

was very delightful to him. He had killed a stag in company with Mr. Palliser, and had stopped beneath a crag to discuss with him a question as to the duty on Irish malt. He had played chess with Mr. Gresham, and had been told that gentleman's opinion on the trial of Mr. Jefferson Davis. Lord Brentford had—at last—called him Finn, and had proved to him that nothing was known in Ireland about sheep. But with Mr. Monk he had had long discussions on abstract questions in politics,—and before the week was over was almost disposed to call himself a disciple, or, at least, a follower of Mr. Monk. Why not of Mr. Monk as well as of any one else? Mr. Monk was in the Cabinet, and of all the members of the Cabinet was the most advanced liberal. "Lady Glencora was not so far wrong the other night," Mr. Monk said to him. "Equality is an ugly word and should n't be used. It misleads, and frightens, and is a bugbear. And she, in using it, had not perhaps a clearly defined meaning for it in her own mind. But the wish of every honest man should be to assist in lifting up those below him, till they be something nearer his own level than he finds them." To this Phineas assented,—and by degrees he found himself assenting to a great many things that Mr. Monk said to him.

Mr. Monk was a thin, tall, gaunt man, who had devoted his whole life to politics, hitherto without any personal reward beyond that which came to him from the reputation of his name, and from the honour of a seat in Parliament. He was one of four or five brothers,—and all besides him were in trade. They had prospered in trade, whereas he had prospered solely in politics; and men said that he was dependent alto-

gether on what his relatives supplied for his support. He had now been in Parliament for more than twenty years, and had been known not only as a radical but as a democrat. Ten years since, when he had risen to fame, but not to repute, among the men who then governed England, nobody dreamed that Joshua Monk would ever be a paid servant of the Crown. He had inveighed against one Minister after another as though they all deserved impeachment. He had advocated political doctrines which at that time seemed to be altogether at variance with any possibility of governing according to English rules of government. He had been regarded as a pestilent thorn in the sides of all Ministers. But now he was a member of the Cabinet, and those whom he had terrified in the old days began to find that he was not so much unlike other men. There are but few horses which you cannot put into harness, and those of the highest spirit will generally do your work the best.

Phineas, who had his eyes about him, thought that he could perceive that Mr. Palliser did not shoot a deer with Mr. Rattler, and that Mr. Gresham played no chess with Mr. Bonteen. Bonteen, indeed, was a noisy pushing man whom nobody seemed to like, and Phineas wondered why he should be at Loughlinter, and why he should be in office. His friend Laurence Fitzgibbon had indeed once endeavoured to explain this. "A man who can vote hard, as I call it; and who will speak a few words now and then as they 're wanted, without any ambition that way, may always have his price. And if he has a pretty wife into the bargain, he ought to have a pleasant time of it." Mr. Rattler no doubt was a very useful man, who thor-

oughly knew his business; but yet, as it seemed to Phineas, no very great distinction was shown to Mr. Rattler at Loughlinter. "If I got as high as that," he said to himself, "I should think myself a miracle of luck. And yet nobody seems to think anything of Rattler. It is all nothing unless one can go to the very top."

"I believe I did right to accept office," Mr. Monk said to him one day, as they sat together on a rock close by one of the little bridges over the Linter. "Indeed, unless a man does so when the bonds of the office tendered to him are made compatible with his own views, he declines to proceed on the open path towards the prosecution of those views. A man who is combating one ministry after another, and striving to imbue those Ministers with his convictions, can hardly decline to become a Minister himself when he finds that those convictions of his own are henceforth,—or at least for some time to come,—to be the ministerial convictions of the day. Do you follow me?"

"Very clearly," said Phineas. "You would have denied your own children had you refused."

"Unless indeed a man were to feel that he was in some way unfitted for office work. I very nearly provided for myself an escape on that plea;—but when I came to sift it, I thought that it would be false. But let me tell you that the delight of political life is altogether in opposition. Why, it is freedom against slavery, fire against clay, movement against stagnation! The very inaccuracy which is permitted to opposition is in itself a charm worth more than all the patronage and all the prestige of ministerial power. You 'll try them both, and then say if you do not agree with me.

Give me the full swing of the benches below the gangway, where I needed to care for no one, and could always enjoy myself on my legs as long as I felt that I was true to those who sent me there! That is all over now. They have got me into harness, and my shoulders are sore. The oats, however, are of the best, and the hay is unexceptionable."

CHAPTER XV.

DONALD BEAN'S PONY.

PHINEAS liked being told that the pleasures of opposition and the pleasures of office were both open to him,—and he liked also to be the chosen receptacle of Mr. Monk's confidence. He had come to understand that he was expected to remain ten days at Loughlinter, and that then there was to be a general movement. Since the first day he had seen but little of Mr. Kennedy, but he had found himself very frequently with Lady Laura. And then had come up the question of his projected trip to Paris with Lord Chiltern. He had received a letter from Lord Chiltern.

"Dear Finn,—Are you going to Paris with me?

"Yours, C."

There had been not a word beyond this, and before he answered it he made up his mind to tell Lady Laura the truth. He could not go to Paris because he had no money.

"I 've just got that from your brother," said he.

"How like Oswald. He writes to me perhaps three times in the year, and his letters are just the same. You will go, I hope?"

"Well;—no."

"I am sorry for that."

"I wonder whether I may tell you the real reason, Lady Laura."

"Nay;—I cannot answer that; but unless it be some political secret between you and Mr. Monk, I should think you might."

"I cannot afford to go to Paris this autumn. It seems to be a shocking admission to make,—though I don't know why it should be."

"Nor I;—but, Mr. Finn, I like you all the better for making it. I am very sorry, for Oswald's sake. It 's so hard to find any companion for him whom he would like and whom we,—that is I,—should think altogether——; you know what I mean, Mr. Finn."

"Your wish that I should go with him is a great compliment, and I thoroughly wish that I could do it. As it is, I must go to Killaloe and retrieve my finances. I dare say, Lady Laura, you can hardly conceive how very poor a man I am." There was a melancholy tone about his voice as he said this, which made her think for the moment whether or no he had been right in going into Parliament, and whether she had been right in instigating him to do so. But it was too late to recur to that question now.

"You must climb into office early, and forego those pleasures of opposition which are so dear to Mr. Monk," she said, smiling. "After all, money is an accident which does not count nearly so high as do some other things. You and Mr. Kennedy have the same enjoyment of everything around you here."

"Yes; while it lasts."

"And Lady Glencora and I stand pretty much on the same footing, in spite of all her wealth,—except that she is a married woman. I do not know what she is worth,—something not to be counted; and I am worth,—just what papa chooses to give me. A ten-pound

note at the present moment I should look upon as great riches." This was the first time she had ever spoken to him of her own position as regards money; but he had heard, or thought that he had heard, that she had been left a fortune altogether independent of her father.

The last of the ten days had now come, and Phineas was discontented and almost unhappy. The more he saw of Lady Laura the more he feared that it was impossible that she should become his wife. And yet from day to day his intimacy with her became more close. He had never made love to her, nor could he discover that it was possible for him to do so. She seemed to be a woman for whom all the ordinary stages of love-making were quite unsuitable. Of course he could declare his love and ask her to be his wife on any occasion on which he might find himself to be alone with her. And on this morning he had made up his mind that he would do so before the day was over. It might be possible that she would never speak to him again;—that all the pleasures and ambitious hopes to which she had introduced him might be over as soon as that rash word should have been spoken! But, nevertheless, he would speak it.

On this day there was to be a grouse-shooting party, and the shooters were to be out early. It had been talked of for some day or two past, and Phineas knew that he could not escape it. There had been some rivalry between him and Mr. Bonteen, and there was to be a sort of match as to which of the two would kill most birds before lunch. But there had also been some half promise on Lady Laura's part that she would walk with him up the Linter and come down upon the

lake, taking an opposite direction from that by which they had returned with Mr. Kennedy.

"But you will be shooting all day," she said, when he proposed it to her as they were starting for the moor. The wagonette that was to take them was at the door, and she was there to see them start. Her father was one of the shooting party, and Mr. Kennedy was another.

"I will undertake to be back in time, if you will not think it too hot. I shall not see you again till we meet in town next year."

"Then I certainly will go with you,—that is to say, if you are here. But you cannot return without the rest of the party, as you are going so far."

"I 'll get back somehow," said Phineas, who was resolved that a few miles more or less of mountain should not detain him from the prosecution of a task so vitally important to him. "If we start at five that will be early enough."

"Quite early enough," said Lady Laura.

Phineas went off to the mountains, and shot his grouse, and won his match, and eat his luncheon. Mr. Bonteen, however, was not beaten by much, and was in consequence somewhat ill-humoured.

"I 'll tell you what I 'll do," said Mr. Bonteen, "I 'll back myself for the rest of the day for a ten-pound note."

Now there had been no money staked on the match at all,—but it had been simply a trial of skill, as to which would kill the most birds in a given time. And the proposition for that trial had come from Mr. Bonteen himself. "I should not think of shooting for money," said Phineas.

"And why not? A bet is the only way to decide these things."

"Partly because I 'm sure I should n't hit a bird," said Phineas, "and partly because I have n't got any money to lose."

"I hate bets," said Mr. Kennedy to him afterwards. "I was annoyed when Bonteen offered the wager. I felt sure, however, you would not accept it."

"I suppose such bets are very common."

"I don't think men ought to propose them unless they are quite sure of their company. Maybe I 'm wrong, and I often feel that I am strait-laced about such things. It is so odd to me that men cannot amuse themselves without pitting themselves against each other. When a man tells me that he can shoot better than I, I tell him that my keeper can shoot better than he."

"All the same, it 's a good thing to excel," said Phineas.

"I 'm not so sure of that," said Mr. Kennedy. "A man who can kill more salmon than anybody else, can rarely do anything else. Are you going on with your match?"

"No; I 'm going to make my way back to Loughlinter."

"Not alone?"

"Yes, alone."

"It 's over nine miles. You can't walk it."

Phineas looked at his watch, and found that it was now two o'clock. It was a broiling day in August, and the way back to Loughlinter, for six or seven out of the nine miles, would be along a high road. "I must do it all the same," said he, preparing for a start.

"I have an engagement with Lady Laura Standish; and as this is the last day that I shall see her, I certainly do not mean to break it."

"An engagement with Lady Laura," said Mr. Kennedy. "Why did you not tell me, that I might have a pony ready? But come along. Donald Bean has a pony. He 's not much bigger than a dog, but he 'll carry you to Loughlinter."

"I can walk it, Mr. Kennedy."

"Yes; and think of the state in which you 'd reach Loughlinter! Come along with me."

"But I can't take you off the mountain," said Phineas.

"Then you must allow me to take you off."

So Mr. Kennedy led the way down to Donald Bean's cottage, and before three o'clock Phineas found himself mounted on a shaggy steed, which, in sober truth, was not much bigger than a large dog. "If Mr. Kennedy is really my rival," said Phineas to himself, as he trotted along, "I almost think that I am doing an unhandsome thing in taking the pony." At five o'clock he was under the portico before the front door, and there he found Lady Laura waiting for him,—waiting for him, or at least ready for him. She had on her hat and gloves and light shawl, and her parasol was in her hand. He thought that he had never seen her look so young, so pretty, and so fit to receive a lover's vows. But at the same moment it occurred to him that she was Lady Laura Standish, the daughter of an Earl, the descendant of a line of Earls,—and that he was the son of a simple country doctor in Ireland. Was it fitting that he should ask such a woman to be his wife? But then Mr. Kennedy was the son of a man who had walked into Glasgow with half-a-crown in his pocket.

Mr. Kennedy's grandfather had been,—Phineas thought that he had heard that Mr. Kennedy's grandfather had been a Scotch drover; whereas his own grandfather had been a little squire near Ennistimon, in county Clare, and his own first cousin once removed still held the paternal acres at Finn Grove. His family was supposed to be descended from kings in that part of Ireland. It certainly did not become him to fear Lady Laura on the score of rank, if it was to be allowed to Mr. Kennedy to proceed without fear on that head. As to wealth, Lady Laura had already told him that her fortune was no greater than his. Her statement to himself on that head made him feel that he should not hesitate on the score of money. They neither had any, and he was willing to work for both. If she feared the risk, let her say so.

It was thus that he argued with himself; but yet he knew,—knew as well as the reader will know,—that he was going to do that which he had no right to do. It might be very well for him to wait,—persuming him to be successful in his love,—for the opening of that oyster with his political sword, that oyster on which he proposed that they should both live; but such waiting could not well be to the taste of Lady Laura Standish. It could hardly be pleasant to her to look forward to his being made a junior lord or an assistant secretary before she could establish herself in her home. So he told himself. And yet he told himself at the same time that it was incumbent on him to persevere.

"I did not expect you in the least," said Lady Laura.

"And yet I spoke very positively."

"But there are things as to which a man may be

very positive, and yet may be allowed to fail. In the first place, how on earth did you get home?"

"Mr. Kennedy got me a pony,—Donald Bean's pony."

"You told him, then?"

"Yes; I told him why I was coming, and that I must be here. Then he took the trouble to come all the way off the mountain to persuade Donald to lend me his pony. I must acknowledge that Mr. Kennedy has conquered me at last."

"I am so glad of that," said Lady Laura. "I knew he would,—unless it were your own fault."

They then went up the path by the brook, from bridge to bridge, till they found themselves out upon the open mountain at the top. Phineas had resolved that he would not speak out his mind till he found himself on that spot; that then he would ask her to sit down, and that while she was so seated he would tell her everything. At the present moment he had on his head a Scotch cap with a grouse's feather in it, and he was dressed in a velvet shooting-jacket and dark knickerbockers; and was certainly, in this costume, as handsome a man as any woman would wish to see. And there was, too, a look of breeding about him which had come to him, no doubt, from the royal Finns of old, which ever served him in great stead. He was, indeed, only Phineas Finn, and was known by the world to be no more; but he looked as though he might have been anybody,—a royal Finn himself. And then he had that special grace of appearing to be altogether unconscious of his own personal advantages. And I think that in truth he was barely conscious of them; that he depended on them very little, if at all; that there

was nothing of personal vanity in his composition. He had never indulged in any hope that Lady Laura would accept him because he was a handsome man.

"After all that climbing," he said, "will you not sit down for a moment?" As he spoke to her she looked at him and told herself that he was as handsome as a god. "Do sit down for one moment," he said. "I have something that I desire to say to you, and to say it here."

"I will," she said; "but I also have something to tell you, and will say it while I am yet standing. Yesterday I accepted an offer of marriage from Mr. Kennedy."

"Then I am too late," said Phineas, and putting his hands into the pockets of his coat, he turned his back upon her, and walked away across the mountain.

What a fool he had been to let her know his secret when her knowledge of it could be of no service to him,—when her knowledge of it could only make him appear foolish in her eyes! But for his life he could not have kept his secret to himself. Nor now could he bring himself to utter a word of even decent civility. But he went on walking as though he could thus leave her there, and never see her again. What an ass he had been in supposing that she cared for him! What a fool to imagine that his poverty could stand a chance against the wealth of Loughlinter! But why had she lured him on? How he wished that he were now grinding, hard at work in Mr. Low's chambers, or sitting at home at Killaloe with the hand of that pretty little Irish girl within his own!

Presently he heard a voice behind him,—calling him gently. Then he turned and found that she was very

near him. He himself had then been standing still for some moments, and she had followed him. "Mr. Finn," she said.

"Well;—yes: what is it?" And turning round he made an attempt to smile.

"Will you not wish me joy, or say a word of congratulation? Had I not thought much of your friendship I should not have been so quick to tell you of my destiny. No one else has been told, except papa."

"Of course I hope you will be happy. Of course I do. No wonder he lent me the pony!"

"You must forget all that."

"Forget what?"

"Well,—nothing. You need forget nothing," said Lady Laura, "for nothing has been said that need be regretted. Only wish me joy, and all will be pleasant."

"Lady Laura, I do wish you joy, with all my heart; —but that will not make all things pleasant. I came up here to ask you to be my wife."

"No;—no, no; do not say it."

"But I have said it, and will say it again. I, poor, penniless, plain simple fool that I am, have been ass enough to love you, Lady Laura Standish; and I brought you up here to-day to ask you to share with me—my nothingness. And this I have done on soil that is to be all your own. Tell me that you regard me as a conceited fool,—as a bewildered idiot."

"I wish to regard you as a dear friend,—both of my own and of my husband," said she, offering him her hand.

"Should I have had a chance, I wonder, if I had spoken a week since?"

"How can I answer such a question, Mr. Finn?

Or, rather, I will answer it fully. It is not a week since we told each other, you to me and I to you, that we were both poor,—both without other means than those which come to us from our fathers. You will make your way;—will make it surely; but how at present could you marry any woman unless she had money of her own? For me,—like so many other girls, it was necessary that I should stay at home or marry some one rich enough to dispense with fortune in a wife. The man whom in all the world I think the best has asked me to share everything with him;—and I have thought it wise to accept his offer."

"And I was fool enough to think that you loved me," said Phineas. To this she made no immediate answer. "Yes, I was. I feel that I owe it you to tell you what a fool I have been. I did. I thought you loved me. At least I thought that perhaps you loved me. It was like a child wanting the moon;—was it not?"

"And why should I not have loved you?" she said slowly, laying her hand gently upon his arm.

"Why not? Because Loughlinter——"

"Stop, Mr. Finn; stop. Do not say to me any unkind word that I have not deserved, and that would make a breach between us. I have accepted the owner of Loughlinter as my husband, because I verily believe that I shall thus best do my duty in that sphere of life to which it has pleased God to call me. I have always liked him, and I will love him. For you,—may I trust myself to speak openly to you?"

"You may trust me as against all others, except us two ourselves."

"For you, then, I will say also that I have always liked you since I knew you; that I have loved you as

a friend;—and could have loved you otherwise had not circumstances showed me so plainly that it would be unwise."

"Oh, Lady Laura!"

"Listen a moment. And pray remember that what I say to you now must never be repeated to any ears. No one knows it but my father, my brother, and Mr. Kennedy. Early in the spring I paid my brother's debts. His affection to me is more than a return for what I have done for him. But when I did this,—when I made up my mind to do it, I made up my mind also that I could not allow myself the same freedom of choice which would otherwise have belonged to me. Will that be sufficient, Mr. Finn?"

"How can I answer you, Lady Laura? Sufficient! And you are not angry with me for what I have said?"

"No, I am not angry. But it is understood, of course, that nothing of this shall ever be repeated,—even among ourselves. Is that a bargain?"

"Oh yes. I shall never speak of it again."

"And now you will wish me joy?"

"I have wished you joy, Lady Laura. And I will do so again. May you have every blessing which the world can give you. You cannot expect me to be very jovial for a while myself; but there will be nobody to see my melancholy moods. I shall be hiding myself away in Ireland. When is the marriage to be?"

"Nothing has been said of that. I shall be guided by him,—but there must, of course, be delay. There will be settlements and I know not what. It may probably be in the spring,—or perhaps the summer. I shall do just what my betters tell me to do."

Phineas had now seated himself on the exact stone

on which he had wished her to sit when he proposed to tell his own story, and was looking forth upon the lake. It seemed to him that everything had been changed for him while he had been up there upon the mountain, and that the change had been marvellous in its nature. When he had been coning up, there had been apparently two alternatives before him: the glory of successful love,—which, indeed, had seemed to him to be a most improbable result of the coming interview,—and the despair and utter banishment attendant on disdainful rejection. But his position was far removed from either of these alternatives. She had almost told him that she would have loved him had she not been poor,—that she was beginning to love him and had quenched her love, because it had become impossible to her to marry a poor man. In such circumstances he could not be angry with her,—he could not quarrel with her; he could not do other than swear to himself that he would be her friend. And yet he loved her better than ever; —and she was the promised wife of his rival! Why had not Donald Bean's pony broken his neck?

"Shall we go down now?" she said.

"Oh yes."

"You will not go on by the lake?"

"What is the use? It is all the same now. You will want to be back to receive him in from shooting."

"Not that, I think. He is above those little cares. But it will be as well we should go the nearest way, as we have spent so much of our time here. I shall tell Mr. Kennedy that I have told you,—if you do not mind."

"Tell him what you please," said Phineas.

"But I won't have it taken in that way, Mr. Finn.

Your brusque want of courtesy to me I have forgiven, but I shall expect you to make up for it by the alacrity of your congratulations to him.. I will not have you uncourteous to Mr. Kennedy."

"If I have been uncourteous I beg your pardon."

"You need not do that. We are old friends, and may take the liberty of speaking plainly to each other; —but you will owe it to Mr. Kennedy to be gracious. Think of the pony."

They walked back to the house together, and as they went down the path very little was said. Just as they were about to come out upon the open lawn, while they were still under cover of the rocks and shrubs, Phineas stopped his companion by standing before her, and then he made his farewell speech to her.

"I must say good-bye to you. I shall be away early in the morning."

"Good-bye, and God bless you," said Lady Laura.

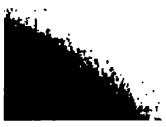
"Give me your hand," said he. And she gave him her hand. "I don't suppose you know what it is to love dearly."

"I hope I do."

"But to be in love! I believe you do not. And to miss your love! I think,—I am bound to think that you have never been so tormented. It is very sore;— but I will do my best, like a man, to get over it."

"Do, my friend, do. So small a trouble will never weigh heavily on shoulders such as yours."

"It will weigh very heavily, but I will struggle hard that it may not crush me. I have loved you so dearly! As we are parting, give me one kiss, that I may think of it and treasure it in my memory!" What murmuring words she spoke to express her refusal of such a



request, I will not quote; but the kiss had been taken before the denial was completed, and then they walked on in silence together,—and in peace, towards the house.

On the next morning six or seven men were going away and there was an early breakfast. There were none of the ladies there, but Mr. Kennedy, the host, was among his friends. A large drag with four horses was there to take the travellers and their luggage to the station, and there was naturally a good deal of noise at the front door as the preparations for the departure were made. In the middle of them Mr. Kennedy took our hero aside. "Laura has told me," said Mr. Kennedy, "that she has acquainted you with my good fortune."

"And I congratulate you most heartily," said Phineas, grasping the other's hand. "You are indeed a lucky fellow."

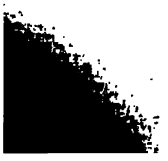
"I feel myself to be so," said Mr. Kennedy. "Such a wife was all that was wanting to me, and such a wife is very hard to find. Will you remember, Finn, that Loughlinter will never be so full but what there will be a room for you, or so empty but what you will be made welcome? I say this on Lady Laura's part and on my own."

Phineas, as he was being carried away to the railway station, could not keep himself from speculating as to how much Kennedy knew of what had taken place during the walk up the Linter. Of one small circumstance that had occurred, he felt quite sure that Mr. Kennedy knew nothing.

CHAPTER XVI.

PHINEAS FINN RETURNS TO KILLALOE.

PHINEAS FINN's first session of Parliament was over,—his first session with all its adventures. When he got back to Mrs. Bunce's house,—for Mrs. Bunce received him for a night in spite of her husband's advice to the contrary,—I am afraid he almost felt that Mrs. Bunce and her rooms were beneath him. Of course he was very unhappy,—as wretched as a man can be; there were moments in which he thought that it would hardly become him to live unless he could do something to prevent the marriage of Lady Laura and Mr. Kennedy. But, nevertheless, he had his consolations. These were reflections which had in them much of melancholy satisfaction. He had not been despised by the woman to whom he had told his love. She had not shown him that she thought him to be unworthy of her. She had not regarded his love as an offence. Indeed, she had almost told him that prudence alone had forbidden her to return his passion. And he had kissed her, and had afterwards parted from her as a dear friend. I do not know why there should have been a flavour of exquisite joy in the midst of his agony as he thought of this;—but it was so. He would never kiss her again. All future delights of that kind would belong to Mr. Kennedy, and he had no real idea of interfering with that gentleman in the fruition of his privileges. But still there was the kiss,—an eternal fact. And then, in all



respects except that of his love, his visit to Loughlinter had been pre-eminently successful. Mr. Monk had become his friend, and had encouraged him to speak during the next session,—setting before him various models, and prescribing for him a course of reading. Lord Brentford had become intimate with him. He was on pleasant terms with Mr. Palliser and Mr. Gresham. And as for Mr. Kennedy,—he and Mr. Kennedy were almost bosom friends. It seemed to him that he had quite surpassed the Rattlers, Fitzgibbons, and Bonteens in that political social success which goes so far towards downright political success, and which in itself is so pleasant. He had surpassed these men in spite of their offices and their acquired positions, and could not but think that even Mr. Low, if he knew it all, would confess that he had been right.

As to his bosom friendship with Mr. Kennedy, that of course troubled him. Ought he not to be driving a poniard into Mr. Kennedy's heart? The conventions of life forbade that; and therefore the bosom friendship was to be excused. If not an enemy to the death, then there could be no reason why he should not be a bosom friend.

He went over to Ireland, staying but one night with Mrs. Bunce, and came down upon them at Killaloe like a god out of the heavens. Even his father was well-nigh overwhelmed by admiration, and his mother and sisters thought themselves only fit to minister to his pleasures. He had learned, if he had learned nothing else, to look as though he were master of the circumstances around him, and was entirely free from internal embarrassment. When his father spoke to him about his legal studies, he did not exactly laugh at his father's

ignorance, but he recapitulated to his father so much of Mr. Monk's wisdom at second hand,—showing plainly that it was his business to study the arts of speech and the technicalities of the House, and not to study law,—that his father had nothing further to say. He had become a man of such dimensions that an ordinary father could hardly dare to inquire into his proceedings; and as for an ordinary mother,—such as Mrs. Finn certainly was,—she could do no more than look after her son's linen with awe.

Mary Flood Jones,—the reader I hope will not quite have forgotten Mary Flood Jones,—was in a great tremor when first she met the hero of Loughshane after returning from the honours of his first session. She had been somewhat disappointed because the newspapers had not been full of the speeches he had made in Parliament. And indeed the ladies of the Finn household had all been ill at ease on this head. They could not imagine why Phineas had restrained himself with so much philosophy. But Miss Flood Jones in discussing the matter with the Miss Finns had never expressed the slightest doubt of his capacity or his judgment. And when tidings came,—the tidings came in a letter from Phineas to his father,—that he did not intend to speak that session, because speeches from a young member on his first session were thought to be inexpedient, Miss Flood Jones and the Miss Finns were quite willing to accept the wisdom of this decision, much as they might regret the effect of it. Mary, when she met her hero, hardly dared to look him in the face, but she remembered accurately all the circumstances of her last interview with him. Could it be that he wore that ringlet near his heart? Mary had received from Bar-

bara Finn certain hairs supposed to have come from the head of Phineas, and these she always wore near her own. And moreover, since she had seen Phineas she had refused an offer of marriage from Mr. Elias Bodkin,—had refused it almost ignominiously,—and when doing so had told herself that she would never be false to Phineas Finn.

"We think it so good of you to come and see us again," she said.

"Good to come home to my own people?"

"Of course you might be staying with plenty of grandees if you liked it."

"No, indeed, Mary. It did happen by accident that I had to go to the house of a man whom perhaps you would call a grandee, and to meet grandees there. But it was only for a few days, and I am very glad to be taken in again here, I can assure you."

"You know how very glad we all are to have you."

"Are you glad to see me, Mary?"

"Very glad. Why should I not be glad, and Barbara the dearest friend I have in the world? Of course she talks about you,—and that makes me think of you."

"If you knew, Mary, how often I think about you." Then Mary, who was very happy at hearing such words, and who was walking in to dinner with him at the moment, could not refrain herself from pressing his arm with her little fingers. She knew that Phineas in his position could not marry at once; but she would wait for him,—oh, forever, if he would only ask her. He of course was a wicked traitor to tell her that he was wont to think of her. But Jove smiles at lovers' perjuries;—and it is well that he should do so, as such perjuries can hardly be avoided altogether in the difficult

circumstances of a successful gentleman's life. Phineas was a traitor, of course, but he was almost forced to be a traitor by the simple fact that Lady Laura Standish was in London, and Mary Flood Jones in Killaloe.

He remained for nearly five months at Killaloe, and I doubt whether his time was altogether well spent. Some of the books recommended to him by Mr. Monk he probably did read, and was often to be found encompassed by blue books. I fear that there was a grain of pretence about his blue books and parliamentary papers, and that in these days he was, in a gentle way, something of an impostor. "You must not be angry with me for not going to you," he said once to Mary's mother when he had declined an invitation to drink tea; "but the fact is that my time is not my own." "Pray don't make any apologies. We are quite aware that we have very little to offer," said Mrs. Flood Jones, who was not altogether happy about Mary, and who perhaps knew more about members of Parliament and blue books than Phineas Finn had supposed. "Mary, you are a fool to think of that man," the mother said to her daughter the next morning. "I don't think of him, mamma; not particularly." "He is no better than anybody else that I can see, and he is beginning to give himself airs," said Mrs. Flood Jones. Mary made no answer; but she went up into her room and swore before a figure of the Virgin that she would be true to Phineas forever and ever, in spite of her mother, in spite of all the world,—in spite, should it be necessary, even of himself.

About Christmas time there came a discussion between Phineas and his father about money. "I hope

you find you get on pretty well," said the doctor, who thought that he had been liberal.

"It 's a tight fit," said Phineas,—who was less afraid of his father than he had been when he last discussed these things.

"I had hoped it would have been ample," said the doctor.

"Don't think for a moment, sir, that I am complaining," said Phineas. "I know it is much more than I have a right to expect."

The doctor began to make an inquiry within his own breast as to whether his son had a right to expect anything;—whether the time had not come in which his son should be earning his own bread. "I suppose," he said, after a pause, "there is no chance of your doing anything at the Bar now?"

"Not immediately. It is almost impossible to combine the two studies together. Mr. Low himself was aware of that. But you are not to suppose that I have given the profession up."

"I hope not,—after all the money it has cost us."

"By no means, sir. And all that I am doing now will, I trust, be of assistance to me when I shall come back to work at the law. Of course it is on the cards that I may go into office,—and if so, public business will become my profession."

"And be turned out with the ministry!"

"Yes; that is true, sir. I must run my chance. If the worst comes to the worst, I hope I might be able to secure some permanent place. I should think that I can hardly fail to do so. But I trust I may never be driven to want it. I thought, however, that we had settled all this before." Then Phineas assumed a look

of injured innocence, as though his father was driving him too hard.

"And in the meantime your money has been enough?" said the doctor, after a pause.

"I had intended to ask you to advance me a hundred pounds," said Phineas. "There were expenses to which I was driven on first entering Parliament."

"A hundred pounds."

"If it be inconvenient, sir, I can do without it." He had not as yet paid for his gun, or for that velvet coat in which he had been shooting, or, most probably, for the knickerbockers. He knew he wanted the hundred pounds badly; but he felt ashamed of himself in asking for it. If he were once in office,—though the office were but a sorry junior lordship,—he would repay his father instantly.

"You shall have it, of course," said the doctor; "but do not let the necessity for asking for more hundreds come oftener than you can help." Phineas said that he would not, and then there was no further discourse about money. It need hardly be said that he told his father nothing of that bill which he had endorsed for Laurence Fitzgibbon.

At last came the time which called him again to London and the glories of London life,—to lobbies, and the clubs, and the gossip of men in office, and the chance of promotion for himself; to the glare of the gas-lamps, the mock anger of rival debaters, and the prospect of the Speaker's wig. During the idleness of the recess he had resolved at any rate upon this,—that a month of the session should not have passed by before he had been seen upon his legs in the House,—had been seen and heard. And many a time as he had wandered

alone, with his gun, across the bogs which lie on the other side of the Shannon from Killaloe, he had practised the sort of address which he would make to the House. He would be short,—always short; and he would eschew all action and gesticulation; Mr. Monk had been very urgent in his instructions to him on that head; but he would be especially careful that no words should escape him which had not in them some purpose. He might be wrong in his purpose, but purpose there should be. He had been twitted more than once at Killaloe with his silence;—for it had been conceived by his fellow-townsmen that he had been sent to Parliament on the special ground of his eloquence. They should twit him no more on his next return. He would speak and would carry the House with him if a human effort might prevail.

So he packed up his things, and started again for London in the beginning of February. "Good-bye, Mary," he said with his sweetest smile. But on this occasion there was no kiss, and no culling of locks. "I know he cannot help it," said Mary to herself. "It is his position. But whether it be for good or evil, I will be true to him."

"I am afraid you are unhappy," Barbara Finn said to her on the next morning.

"No; I am not unhappy,—not at all. I have a deal to make me happy and proud. I don't mean to be a bit unhappy." Then she turned away and cried heartily, and Barbara Finn cried with her for company.

CHAPTER XVII.

PHINEAS FINN RETURNS TO LONDON.

PHINEAS had received two letters during his recess at Killaloe from two women who admired him much, which, as they were both short, shall be submitted to the reader. The first was as follows:—

"Saulsby, October 20, 186—.

"My dear Mr. Finn,—I write a line to tell you that our marriage is to be hurried on as quickly as possible. Mr. Kennedy does not like to be absent from Parliament; nor will he be content to postpone the ceremony till the session be over. The day fixed is the 3rd of December, and we then go at once to Rome, and intend to be back in London by the opening of Parliament. Yours most sincerely,

"LAURA STANDISH.

"Our London address will be No. 52, Grosvenor Place."

To this he wrote an answer as short, expressing his ardent wishes that those winter hymeneals might produce nothing but happiness, and saying that he would not be in town many days before he knocked at the door of No. 52, Grosvenor Place.

And the second letter was as follows:—

"Great Marlborough Street, December, 186—.

"Dear and Honoured Sir,—Bunce is getting ever so anxious about the rooms, and says as how he has a

young Equity draftsman and wife and baby as would take the whole house, and all because Miss Pouncefoot said a word about her port-wine, which any lady of her age might say in her tantrums, and mean nothing after all. Me and Miss Pouncefoot 's knowed each other for seven years, and what 's a word or two as is n't meant after that? But, honoured sir, it 's not about that as I write to trouble you, but to ask if I may say for certain that you 'll take the rooms again in February. It 's easy to let them for the month after Christmas, because of the pantomimes. Only say at once, because Bunce is nagging me day after day. I don't want nobody's wife and baby to have to do for, and 'd sooner have a Parliament gent like yourself than any one else.

"Yours 'umbly and respectful,

"JANE BUNCE."

To this he replied that he would certainly come back to the rooms in Great Marlborough Street, should he be lucky enough to find them vacant, and he expressed his willingness to take them on and from the 1st of February. And on the 3rd of February he found himself in the old quarters, Mrs. Bunce having contrived, with much conjugal adroitness, both to keep Miss Pouncefoot and to stave off the Equity draftsman's wife and baby. Bunce, however, received Phineas very coldly, and told his wife the same evening that as far as he could see their lodger would never turn up to be a trump in the matter of the ballot. "If he means well, why did he go and stay with them lords down in Scotland? I knows all about it. I knows a man when I sees him. Mr. Low, who 's looking out

to be a tory judge some of these days, is a deal better;—because he knows what he 's after."

Immediately on his return to town, Phineas found himself summoned to a political meeting at Mr. Mildmay's house in St. James's Square. "We 're going to begin in earnest this time," Barrington Erle said to him at the club.

"I am glad of that," said Phineas.

"I suppose you heard all about it down at Loughlinter?"

Now, in truth, Phineas had heard very little of any settled plan down at Loughlinter. He had played a game of chess with Mr. Gresham, and had shot a stag with Mr. Palliser, and had discussed sheep with Lord Brentford, but had hardly heard a word about politics from any one of those influential gentlemen. From Mr. Monk he had heard much of a coming Reform Bill; but his communications with Mr. Monk had rather been private discussions,—in which he had learned Mr. Monk's own views on certain points,—than revelations on the intention of the party to which Mr. Monk belonged. "I heard of nothing settled," said Phineas; "but I suppose we are to have a Reform Bill."

"That is a matter of course."

"And I suppose we are not to touch the question of ballot."

"That 's the difficulty," said Barrington Erle. "But of course we shan't touch it as long as Mr. Mildmay is in the Cabinet. He will never consent to the ballot as First Minister of the Crown."

"Nor would Gresham, or Palliser," said Phineas, who did not choose to bring forward his greatest gun at first.

"I don't know about Gresham. It is impossible to say what Gresham might bring himself to do. Gresham is a man who may go any lengths before he has done. Planty Pall,"—for such was the name by which Mr. Plantagenet Palliser was ordinarily known among his friends,—"would of course go with Mr. Mildmay and the Duke."

"And Monk is opposed to the ballot," said Phineas.

"Ah, that 's the question. No doubt he has assented to the proposition of a measure without the ballot; but if there should come a row, and men like Turnbull demand it, and the London mob kick up a shindy, I don't know how far Monk would be steady."

"Whatever he says, he 'll stick to."

"He is your leader, then?" asked Barrington.

"I don't know that I have a leader. Mr. Mildmay leads our side; and if anybody leads me, he does. But I have great faith in Mr. Monk."

"There 's one who would go for the ballot to-morrow, if it were brought forward stoutly," said Barrington Erle to Mr. Rattler a few minutes afterwards, pointing to Phineas as he spoke.

"I don't think much of that young man," said Rattler.

Mr. Bonteen and Mr. Rattler had put their heads together during that last evening at Loughlinter, and had agreed that they did not think much of Phineas Finn. Why did Mr. Kennedy go down off the mountain to get him a pony? And why did Mr. Gresham play chess with him? . . . t er and Mr. Bonteen may have been right in p their minds to think but little of Phineas F Barrington Erle had been quite wrong wh he that Phineas would "go for the ballot" to ide up his

mind very strongly that he would always oppose the ballot. That he would hold the same opinion throughout his life, no one should pretend to say; but in his present mood, and under the tuition which he had received from Mr. Monk, he was prepared to demonstrate, out of the House and in it, that the ballot was, as a political measure, unmanly, ineffective, and enervating. Enervating had been a great word with Mr. Monk, and Phineas had clung to it with admiration.

The meeting took place at Mr. Mildmay's on the third day of the session. Phineas had of course heard of such meetings before, but had never attended one. Indeed, there had been no such gathering when Mr. Mildmay's party came into power early in the last session. Mr. Mildmay and his men had then made their effort in turning out their opponents, and had been well pleased to rest awhile upon their oars. Now, however, they must go again to work, and therefore the liberal party was collected at Mr. Mildmay's house, in order that the liberal party might be told what it was that Mr. Mildmay and his Cabinet intended to do.

Phineas Finn was quite in the dark as to what would be the nature of the performance on this occasion, and entertained some idea that every gentleman present would be called upon to express individually his assent or dissent in regard to the measure proposed. He walked to St. James's Square with Laurence Fitzgibbon; but even with Fitzgibbon was ashamed to show his ignorance by asking questions. "After all," said Fitzgibbon, "this kind of thing means nothing. I know as well as possible, and so do you, what Mr. Mildmay will say,—and then Gresham will say a few words; and then Turnbull will make a murmur, and

then we shall all assent,—to anything or to nothing; —and then it will be over." Still Phineas did not understand whether the assent required would or would not be an individual personal assent. When the affair was over he found that he was disappointed, and that he might almost as well have stayed away from the meeting,—except that he had attended at Mr. Mildmay's bidding, and had given a silent adhesion to Mr. Mildmay's plan of reform for that session. Laurence Fitzgibbon had been very nearly correct in his description of what would occur. Mr. Mildmay made a long speech. Mr. Turnbull, the great radical of the day,—the man who was supposed to represent what many called the Manchester school of politics,—asked half-a-dozen questions. In answer to these Mr. Gresham made a short speech. Then Mr. Mildmay made another speech, and then all was over. The gist of the whole thing was, that there should be a Reform Bill,—very generous in its enlargement of the franchise, —but no ballot. Mr. Turnbull expressed his doubt whether this would be satisfactory to the country; but even Mr. Turnbull was soft in his tone and complaisant in his manner. As there was no reporter present,—that plan of turning private meetings at gentlemen's houses into public assemblies not having been as yet adopted,—there could be no need for energy or violence. They went to Mildmay's house to hear Mr. Mildmay's plan,—and they heard it.

Two days after this Phineas was to dine with Mr. Monk. Mr. Monk had asked him in the lobby of the House. "I don't give dinner-parties," he said, "but I should like you to come and meet Mr. Turnbull." Phineas accepted the invitation as a matter of course.

There were many who said that Mr. Turnbull was the greatest man in the nation, and that the nation could be saved only by a direct obedience to Mr. Turnbull's instructions. Others said that Mr. Turnbull was a demagogue and at heart a rebel; that he was un-English, false, and very dangerous. Phineas was rather inclined to believe the latter statement; and as danger and dangerous men are always more attractive than safety and safe men, he was glad to have an opportunity of meeting Mr. Turnbull at dinner.

In the meantime he went to call on Lady Laura, whom he had not seen since the last evening which he spent in her company at Loughlinter,—whom, when he was last speaking to her, he had kissed close beneath the falls of the Linter. He found her at home, and with her was her husband. "Here is a Darby and Joan meeting, is it not?" she said, getting up to welcome him. He had seen Mr. Kennedy before, and had been standing close to him during the meeting at Mr. Mildmay's.

"I am very glad to find you both together."

"But Robert is going away this instant," said Lady Laura. "Has he told you of our adventures at Rome?"

"Not a word."

"Then I must tell you;—but not now. The dear old Pope was so civil to us. I came to think it quite a pity that he should be in trouble."

"I must be off," said the husband, getting up. "But I shall meet you at dinner, I believe."

"Do you dine at Mr. Monk's?"

"Yes, and am asked expressly to hear Turnbull [illegible] convert of you. There are only to be us four.

Au revoir." Then Mr. Kennedy went, and Phineas found himself alone with Lady Laura. He hardly knew how to address her, and remained silent. He had not prepared himself for the interview as he ought to have done, and felt himself to be awkward. She evidently expected him to speak, and for a few seconds sat waiting for what he might say.

At last she found that it was incumbent on her to begin. "Were you surprised at our suddenness when you got my note?"

"A little. You had spoken of waiting."

"I had never imagined that he would have been impetuous. And he seems to think that even the business of getting himself married would not justify him in staying away from Parliament. He is a rigid martinet in all matters of duty."

"I did not wonder that he should be in a hurry, but that you should submit."

"I told you that I should do just what the wise people told me. I asked papa, and he said that it would be better. So the lawyers were driven out of their minds, and the milliners out of their bodies, and the thing was done."

"Who was there at the marriage?"

"Oswald was not there. That I know is what you mean to ask. Papa said that he might come if he pleased. Oswald stipulated that he should be received as a son. Then my father spoke the hardest word that ever fell from his mouth."

"What did he say?"

"I will not repeat it,—not altogether. But he said that Oswald was not entitled to a son's treatment. He

was very sore about my money, because Robert was so generous as to his settlement. So the breach between them is as wide as ever."

"And where is Chiltern now?" said Phineas.

"Down in Northamptonshire, staying at some inn from whence he hunts. He tells me that he is quite alone,—that he never dines out, never has any one to dine with him, that he hunts five or six days a week,—and reads at night."

"That is not a bad sort of life."

"Not if the reading is any good. But I cannot bear that he should be so solitary. And if he breaks down in it, then his companions will not be fit for him. Do you ever hunt?"

"Oh yes,—at home in county Clare. All Irishmen hunt."

"I wish you would go down to him and see him. He would be delighted to have you."

Phineas thought over the proposition before he answered it, and then made the reply that he had made once before. "I would do so, Lady Laura,—but that I have no money for hunting in England."

"Alas, alas!" said she, smiling. "How that hits one on every side!"

"I might manage it,—for a couple of days,—in March."

"Do not do what you think you ought not to do," said Lady Laura.

"No; certainly. But I should like it, and if I can I will."

"He could mount you, I have no doubt. He has no other expense now, and keeps a stable full of horses.

I think he has seven or eight. And now tell me, Mr. Finn; when are you going to charm the House? Or is it your first intention to strike terrror?"

He blushed,—he knew that he blushed as he answered. "Oh, I suppose I shall make some sort of attempt before long. I can't bear the idea of being a bore."

"I think you ought to speak, Mr. Finn."

"I do not know about that, but I certainly mean to try. There will be lots of opportunities about the new Reform Bill. Of course you know that Mr. Mildmay is going to bring it in at once. You hear all that from Mr. Kennedy."

"And papa has told me. I still see papa almost every day. You must call upon him. Mind you do." Phineas said that he certainly would. "Papa is very lonely now, and I sometimes feel that I have been almost cruel in deserting him. And I think that he has a horror of the house,—especially later in the year,—always fancying that he will meet Oswald. I am so unhappy about it all, Mr. Finn."

"Why does n't your brother marry?" said Phineas, knowing nothing as yet of Lord Chiltern and Violet Effingham. "If he were to marry well, that would bring your father round."

"Yes,—it would."

"And why should he not?"

Lady Laura paused before she answered; and then she told the whole story. "He is violently in love, and the girl he loves has refused him twice."

"Is it with Miss Effingham?" asked Phineas, guessing the truth at once, and remembering what Miss Effingham had said to him when riding in the wood.

"Yes;—with Violet Effingham; my father's pet, his favourite, whom he loves next to myself,—almost as well as myself; whom he would really welcome as a daughter. He would gladly make her mistress of his house, and of Saulsby. Everything would then go smoothly."

"But she does not like Lord Chiltern?"

"I believe she loves him in her heart; but she is afraid of him. As she says herself, a girl is bound to be so careful of herself. With all her seeming frolic, Violet Effingham is very wise."

Phineas, though not conscious of anything akin to jealousy, was annoyed at the revelation made to him. Since he had heard that Lord Chiltern was in love with Miss Effingham, he did not like Lord Chiltern quite as well as he had done before. He himself had simply admired Miss Effingham, and had taken pleasure in her society; but, though this had been all, he did not like to hear of another man wanting to marry her, and he was almost angry with Lady Laura for saying that she believed Miss Effingham loved her brother. If Miss Effingham had twice refused Lord Chiltern, that ought to have been sufficient. It was not that Phineas was in love with Miss Effingham himself. As he was still violently in love with Lady Laura, any other love was of course impossible; but, nevertheless, there was something offensive to him in the story as it had been told. "If it be wisdom on her part," said he, answering Lady Laura's last words, "you cannot find fault with her for her decision."

"I find no fault;—but I think my brother would make her happy."

Lady Laura, when she was left alone, at once reverted to the tone in which Phineas Finn had answered her remarks about Miss Effingham. Phineas was very ill able to conceal his thoughts, and wore his heart almost upon his sleeve. "Can it be possible that he cares for her himself?" That was the nature of Lady Laura's first question to herself upon the matter. And in asking herself that question, she thought nothing of the disparity in rank or fortune between Phineas Finn and Violet Effingham. Nor did it occur to her as at all improbable that Violet might accept the love of him who had so lately been her own lover. But the idea grated against her wishes on two sides. She was most anxious that Violet should ultimately become her brother's wife,—and she could not be pleased that Phineas should be able to love any woman.

I must beg my readers not to be carried away by those last words into any erroneous conclusion. They must not suppose that Lady Laura Kennedy, the lately married bride, indulged a guilty passion for the young man who had loved her. Though she had probably thought often of Phineas Finn since her marriage, her thoughts had never been of a nature to disturb her rest. It had never occurred to her even to think that she regarded him with any feeling that was an offence to her husband. She would have hated herself had any such idea presented itself to her mind. She prided herself on being a pure high-principled woman, who had kept so strong a guard upon herself as to be nearly free from the dangers of those rocks upon which other women made shipwreck of their happiness. She took pride in this, and would then blame herself for her own pride. But though she so blamed herself, it never oc-

curred to her to think that to her there might be danger of such shipwreck. She had put away from herself the idea of love when she had first perceived that Phineas had regarded her with more than friendship, and had accepted Mr. Kennedy's offer with an assured conviction that by doing so she was acting best for her own happiness and for that of all those concerned. She had felt the romance of the position to be sweet when Phineas had stood with her at the top of the falls of the Linter, and had told her of the hopes which he had dared to indulge. And when at the bottom of the falls he had presumed to take her in his arms, she had forgiven him without difficulty to herself, telling herself that that would be the alpha and the omega of the romance of her life. She had not felt herself bound to tell Mr. Kennedy of what had occurred,—but she had felt that he could hardly have been angry even had he been told. And she had often thought of her lover since, and of his love,—telling herself that she too had once had a lover, never regarding her husband in that light; but her thoughts had not frightened her as guilty thoughts will do. There had come a romance which had been pleasant, and it was gone. It had been soon banished,—but it had left to her a sweet flavour, of which she loved to taste the sweetness though she knew that it was gone. And the man should be her friend, but especially her husband's friend. It should be her care to see that his life was successful,—and especially her husband's care. It was a great delight to her to know that her husband liked the man. And the man would marry, and the man's wife should be her friend. All this had been very pure and very pleasant. Now an idea had flitted across her brain

that the man was in love with some one else,—and she did not like it!

But she did not therefore become afraid of herself, or in the least realise at once the danger of her own position. Her immediate glance at the matter did not go beyond the falseness of men. If it were so, as she suspected,—if Phineas Finn had in truth transferred his affections to Violet Effingham, of how little value was the love of such a man! It did not occur to her at this moment that she also had transferred hers to Robert Kennedy, or that, if not, she had done worse. But she did remember that in the autumn this young Phœbus among men had turned his back upon her out upon the mountain that he might hide from her the agony of his heart when he learned that she was to be the wife of another man; and that now, before the winter was over, he could not hide from her the fact that his heart was elsewhere! And then she speculated, and counted up facts, and satisfied herself that Phineas could not even have seen Violet Effingham since they two had stood together upon the mountain. How false are men!—how false and how weak of heart!

"Chiltern and Violet Effingham!" said Phineas to himself, as he walked away from Grosvenor Place. "Is it fair that she should be sacrificed because she is rich, and because she is so winning and so fascinating that Lord Brentford would receive even his son for the sake of receiving also such a daughter-in-law?" Phineas also liked Lord Chiltern; had seen or fancied that he had seen fine things in him; had looked forward to his regeneration, hoping, perhaps, that he might have some hand in the good work. But he did not recog-

nise the propriety of sacrificing Violet Effingham even for work so good as this. If Miss Effingham had refused Lord Chiltern twice, surely that ought to be sufficient. It did not as yet occur to him that the love of such a girl as Violet would be a great treasure—to himself. As regarded himself, he was still in love,—hopelessly in love, with Lady Laura Kennedy!

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. TURNBULL.

It was a Wednesday evening and there was no House;—and at seven o'clock Phineas was at Mr. Monk's hall door. He was the first of the guests, and he found Mr. Monk alone in the dining-room. "I am doing butler," said Mr. Monk, who had a brace of decanters in his hands, which he proceeded to put down in the neighbourhood of the fire. "But I have finished, and now we will go upstairs to receive the two great men properly."

"I beg your pardon for coming too early," said Finn.

"Not a minute too early. Seven is seven, and it is I who am too late. But, Lord bless you, you don't think I 'm ashamed of being found in the act of decanting my own wine! I remember Lord Palmerston saying before some committee about salaries, five or six years ago now, I dare say, that it would n't do for an English Minister to have his hall door opened by a maid-servant. Now, I 'm an English Minister, and I 've got nobody but a maid-servant to open my hall door, and I 'm obliged to look after my own wine. I wonder whether it 's improper? I should n't like to be the means of injuring the British Constitution."

"Perhaps if you resign soon, and if nobody follows your example, grave evil results may be avoided."

"I sincerely hope so, for I do love the British Constitution; and I love also the respect in which mem-

bers of the English Cabinet are held. Now Turnbull, who will be here in a moment, hates it all; but he is a rich man, and has more powdered footmen hanging about his house than ever Lord Palmerston had himself."

"He is still in business."

"Oh yes;—and makes his thirty thousand a year. Here he is. How are you, Turnbull? We were talking about my maid-servant. I hope she opened the door for you properly."

"Certainly,—as far as I perceived," said Mr. Turnbull, who was better at a speech than a joke. "A very respectable young woman I should say."

"There is not one more so in all London," said Mr. Monk; "but Finn seems to think that I ought to have a man in livery."

"It is a matter of perfect indifference to me," said Mr. Turnbull. "I am one of those who never think of such things."

"Nor I either," said Mr. Monk. Then the Laird of Loughlinter was announced, and they all went down to dinner.

Mr. Turnbull was a good-looking robust man about sixty, with long grey hair and a red complexion, with hard eyes, a well-cut nose, and full lips. He was nearly six feet high, stood quite upright, and always wore a black swallow-tail coat, black trousers, and a black silk waistcoat. In the House, at least, he was always so dressed, and at dinner tables. What difference there might be in his costume when at home at Staleybridge few of those who saw him in London had the means of knowing. There was nothing in his face to indicate special talent. No one looking at him would take him

to be a fool; but there was none of the fire of genius in his eye, nor was there in the lines of his mouth any of that play of thought or fancy which is generally to be found in the faces of men and women who have made themselves great. Mr. Turnbull had certainly made himself great, and could hardly have done so without force of intellect. He was one of the most popular, if not the most popular politician in the country. Poor men believed in him, thinking that he was their most honest public friend; and men who were not poor believed in his power, thinking that his counsels must surely prevail. He had obtained the ear of the House and the favour of the reporters, and opened his voice at no public dinner, on no public platform, without a conviction that the words spoken by him would be read by thousands. The first necessity for good speaking is a large audience; and of this advantage Mr. Turnbull had made himself sure. And yet it could hardly be said that he was a great orator. He was gifted with a powerful voice, with strong, and I may, perhaps, call them broad convictions, with perfect self-reliance, with almost unlimited powers of endurance, with hot ambition, with no keen scruples, and with a moral skin of great thickness. Nothing said against him pained him, no attacks wounded him, no raillery touched him in the least. There was not a sore spot about him, and probably his first thoughts on waking every morning told him that he, at least, was totus teres atque rotundus. He was, of course, a thorough radical,—and so was Mr. Monk. But Mr. Monk's first waking thoughts were probably exactly the reverse of those of his friend. Mr. Monk was a much hotter man in debate than Mr. Turnbull; but Mr. Monk was ever

doubting of himself, and never doubted of himself so much as when he had been most violent, and also most effective, in debate. When Mr. Monk jeered at himself for being a Cabinet Minister and keeping no attendant grander than a parlour-maid, there was a substratum of self-doubt under the joke.

Mr. Turnbull was certainly a great radical, and as such enjoyed a great reputation. I do not think that high office in the State had ever been offered to him; but things had been said which justified him, or seemed to himself to justify him, in declaring that in no possible circumstances would he serve the Crown. "I serve the people," he had said, "and much as I respect the servants of the Crown, I think that my own office is the higher." He had been greatly called to task for this speech; and Mr. Mildmay, the present Premier, had asked him whether he did not recognise the so-called servants of the Crown as the most hard-worked and truest servants of the people. The House and the press had supported Mr. Mildmay, but to all that Mr. Turnbull was quite indifferent; and when an assertion made by him before three or four thousand persons at Manchester, to the effect that he,—he specially,—was the friend and servant of the people, was received with acclamation, he felt quite satisfied that he had gained his point. Progressive reform in the franchise, of which manhood suffrage should be the acknowledged and not far distant end, equal electoral districts, ballot, tenant right for England as well as Ireland, reduction of the standing army till there should be no standing army to reduce, utter disregard of all political movements in Europe, an almost idolatrous admiration for all political movements in America, free trade in every-

thing except malt, and an absolute extinction of a State Church,—these were among the principal articles in Mr. Turnbull's political catalogue. And I think that when once he had learned the art of arranging his words as he stood upon his legs, and had so mastered his own voice as to have obtained the ear of the House, the work of his life was not difficult. Having nothing to construct, he could always deal with generalities. Being free from responsibility, he was not called upon either to study details or to master even great facts. It was his business to inveigh against existing evils, and perhaps there is no easier business when once the privilege of an audience has been attained. It was his work to cut down forest-trees, and he had nothing to do with the subsequent cultivation of the land. Mr. Monk had once told Phineas Finn how great were the charms of that inaccuracy which was permitted to the Opposition. Mr. Turnbull no doubt enjoyed these charms to the full, though he would sooner have put a padlock on his mouth for a month than have owned as much. Upon the whole, Mr. Turnbull was no doubt right in resolving that he would not take office, though some reticence on that subject might have been more becoming to him.

The conversation at dinner, though it was altogether on political subjects, had in it nothing of special interest as long as the girl was there to change the plates; but when she was gone, and the door was closed, it gradually opened out, and there came on to be a pleasant sparring match between the two great radicals,—the radical who had joined himself to the governing powers, and the radical who stood aloof. Mr. Kennedy barely said a word now and then, and Phineas

was almost as silent as Mr. Kennedy. He had come there to hear some such discussion, and was quite willing to listen while guns of such great calibre were being fired off for his amusement.

"I think Mr. Mildmay is making a great step forward," said Mr. Turnbull.

"I think he is," said Mr. Monk.

"I did not believe that he would ever live to go so far. It will hardly suffice even for this year; but still, coming from him, it is a great deal. It only shows how far a man may be made to go, if only the proper force be applied. After all, it matters very little who are the Ministers."

"That is what I have always declared," said Mr. Monk.

"Very little indeed. We don't mind whether it be Lord De Terrier, or Mr. Mildmay, or Mr. Gresham, or you yourself, if you choose to get yourself made First Lord of the Treasury."

"I have no such ambition, Turnbull."

"I should have thought you had. If I went in for that kind of thing myself, I should like to go to the top of the ladder. I should feel that if I could do any good at all by becoming a Minister, I could only do it by becoming first Minister."

"You would n't doubt your own fitness for such a position?"

"I doubt my fitness for the position of any Minister," said Mr. Turnbull.

"You mean that on other grounds," said Mr. Kennedy.

"I mean it on every ground," said Mr. Turnbull, rising on his legs and standing with his back to the fire.

"Of course I am not fit to have diplomatic intercourse with men who would come to me simply with the desire of deceiving me. Of course I am unfit to deal with members of Parliament who would flock around me because they wanted places. Of course I am unfit to answer every man's question so as to give no information to any one."

"Could you not answer them so as to give information?" said Mr. Kennedy.

But Mr. Turnbull was so intent on his speech that it may be doubted whether he heard this interruption. He took no notice of it as he went on. "Of course I am unfit to maintain the proprieties of a seeming confidence between a Crown all-powerless and a people all-powerful. No man recognises his own unfitness for such work more clearly than I do, Mr. Monk. But if I took in hand such work at all, I should like to be the leader, and not the led. Tell us fairly, now, what are your convictions worth in Mr. Mildmay's Cabinet?"

"That is a question which a man may hardly answer himself," said Mr. Monk.

"It is a question which a man should at least answer for himself before he consents to sit there," said Mr. Turnbull, in a tone of voice which was almost angry.

"And what reason have you for supposing that I have omitted that duty?" said Mr. Monk.

"Simply this,—that I cannot reconcile your known opinions with the practices of your colleagues."

"I will not tell you what my convictions may be worth in Mr. Mildmay's Cabinet. I will not take upon myself to say that they are worth the chair on which I sit when I am there. But I will tell you what my aspirations were when I consented to fill that chair, and you

shall judge of their worth. I thought that they might possibly leaven the batch of bread which we have to bake,—giving to the whole batch more of the flavour of reform than it would have possessed had I absented myself. I thought that when I was asked to join Mr. Mildmay and Mr. Gresham, the very fact of that request indicated liberal progress, and that if I refused the request I should be declining to assist in good work."

"You could have supported them, if anything were proposed worthy of support," said Mr. Turnbull.

"Yes; but I could not have been so effective in taking care that some measure be proposed worthy of support as I may possibly be now. I thought a good deal about it, and I believe that my decision was right."

"I am sure you were right," said Mr. Kennedy.

"There can be no juster object of ambition than a seat in the Cabinet," said Phineas.

"Sir, I much dispute that," said Mr. Turnbull, turning round upon our hero. "I regard the position of our high Ministers as most respectable."

"Thank you for so much," said Mr. Monk. But the orator went on again, regardless of the interruption:

"The position of gentlemen in inferior offices,—of gentlemen who attend rather to the nods and winks of their superiors in Downing Street than to the interest of their constituents,—I do not regard as being highly respectable."

"A man cannot begin at the top," said Phineas.

"Our friend Mr. Monk has begun at what you are pleased to call the top," said Mr. Turnbull. "But I will not profess to think that even he has raised himself by going into office. To be an independent representative of a really popular commercial constitu-

ency is, in my estimation, the highest object of an Englishman's ambition."

"But why commercial, Mr. Turnbull?" said Mr. Kennedy.

"Because the commercial constituencies really do elect their own members in accordance with their own judgments, whereas the counties and the small towns are coerced either by individuals or by a combination of aristocratic influences."

"And yet," said Mr. Kennedy, "there are not half-a-dozen conservatives returned by all the counties in Scotland."

"Scotland is very much to be honoured," said Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Kennedy was the first to take his departure, and Mr. Turnbull followed him very quickly. Phineas got up to go at the same time, but stayed at his host's request, and sat for a while smoking a cigar.

"Turnbull is a wonderful man," said Mr. Monk.

"Does he not domineer too much?"

"His fault is not arrogance, so much as ignorance that there is, or should be, a difference between public and private life. In the House of Commons a man in Mr. Turnbull's position must speak with dictatorial assurance. He is always addressing, not the House only, but the country at large, and the country will not believe in him unless he believe in himself. But he forgets that he is not always addressing the country at large. I wonder what sort of a time Mrs. Turnbull and the little Turnbu have of it?"

Phineas, he w it ho , made up his mind that Mrs. Turn . and Turnbulls must probably have a l tu

CHAPTER XIX.

LORD CHILTERN RIDES HIS HORSE BONEBREAKER.

It was known that whatever might be the details of Mr. Mildmay's bill, the ballot would not form a part of it; and as there was a strong party in the House of Commons, and a very numerous party out of it, who were desirous that voting by ballot should be made a part of the electoral law, it was decided that an independent motion should be brought on in anticipation of Mr. Mildmay's bill. The arrangement was probably one of Mr. Mildmay's own making; so that he might be hampered by no opposition on that subject by his own followers if,—as he did not doubt,—the motion should be lost. It was expected that the debate would not last over one night, and Phineas resolved that he would make his maiden speech on this occasion. He had very strong opinions as to the inefficacy of the ballot for any good purposes, and thought that he might be able to strike out from his convictions some sparks of that fire which used to be so plentiful with him at the old debating clubs. But even at breakfast that morning his heart began to beat quickly at the idea of having to stand on his legs before so critical an audience.

He knew that it would be well that he should if possible get the subject off his mind during the day, and therefore went out among the people who certainly would not talk to him about the ballot. He sat

for nearly an hour in the morning with Mr. Low, and did not even tell Mr. Low that it was his intention to speak on that day. Then he made one or two other calls, and at about three went up to Portman Square to look for Lord Chiltern. It was now nearly the end of February, and Phineas had often seen Lady Laura. He had not seen her brother, but had learned from his sister that he had been driven up to London by the frost. He was told by the porter at Lord Brentford's that Lord Chiltern was in the house, and as he was passing through the hall he met Lord Brentford himself. He was thus driven to speak, and felt himself called upon to explain why he was there. "I am come to see Lord Chiltern," he said.

"Is Lord Chiltern in the house?" said the Earl, turning to the servant.

"Yes, my lord; his lordship arrived last night."

"You will find him upstairs, I suppose," said the Earl. "For myself I know nothing of him." He spoke in an angry tone, as though he resented the fact that any one should come to his house to call upon his son; and turned his back quickly upon Phineas. But he thought better of it before he reached the front door, and turned again. "By-the-bye," said he, "what majority shall we have to-night, Finn?"

"Pretty nearly as many as you please to name, my lord," said Phineas.

"Well;—yes; I suppose we are tolerably safe. You ought to speak upon it."

"Perhaps I may," said Phineas, feeling that he blushed as he spoke.

"Do," said the Earl. "Do. If you see Lord Chiltern will you tell him from me that I should be glad to

see him before he leaves London. I shall be at home till noon to-morrow." Phineas, much astonished at the commission given to him, of course said that he would do as he was desired, and then passed on to Lord Chiltern's apartments.

He found his friend standing in the middle of the room, without coat and waistcoat, with a pair of dumb-bells in his hands. "When there 's no hunting I 'm driven to this kind of thing," said Lord Chiltern.

"I suppose it 's good exercise," said Phineas.

"And it gives me something to do. When I 'm in London I feel like a gipsy in church, till the time comes for prowling out at night. I 've no occupation for my days whatever, and no place to which I can take myself. I can't stand in a club window as some men do, and I should disgrace any decent club if I did stand there. I belong to the Travellers, but I doubt whether the porter would let me go in."

"I think you pique yourself on being more of an outer Bohemian than you are," said Phineas.

"I pique myself on this, that whether Bohemian or not, I will go nowhere that I am not wanted. Though, —for the matter of that, I suppose I 'm not wanted here." Then Phineas gave him the message from his father. "He wishes to see me to-morrow morning?" continued Lord Chiltern. "Let him send me word what it is he has to say to me. I do not choose to be insulted by him, though he is my father."

"I would certainly go, if I were you."

"I doubt it very much, if all the circumstances were the same. Let him tell me what he wants."

"Of course I cannot ask him, Chiltern."

"I know what he wants very well. Laura has been

interfering and doing no good. You know Violet Effingham?"

"Yes; I know her," said Phineas, much surprised.

"They want her to marry me."

"And you do not wish to marry her?"

"I did not say that. But do you think that such a girl as Miss Effingham would marry such a man as I am? She would be much more likely to take you. By George, she would! Do you know that she has three thousand a year of her own?"

"I know that she has money."

"That 's about the tune of it. I would take her without a shilling to-morrow, if she would have me,—because I like her. She is the only girl I ever did like. But what is the use of my liking her? They have painted me so black among them, especially my father, that no decent girl would think of marrying me."

"Your father can't be angry with you if you do your best to comply with his wishes."

"I don't care a straw whether he be angry or not. He allows me eight hundred a year, and he knows that if he stopped it I should go to the Jews the next day. I could not help myself. He can't leave an acre away from me, and yet he won't join me in raising money for the sake of paying Laura her fortune."

"Lady Laura can hardly want money now."

"That detestable prig whom she has chosen to marry, and whom I hate with all my heart, is richer than ever Crœsus was; but nevertheless Laura ought to have her own money. She shall have it some day."

"I would see Lord Brentford, if I were you."

"I will think about it. Now tell me about coming down to Willingford. Laura says you will come some

day in March. I can mount you for a couple of days and should be delighted to have you. My horses all pull like the mischief, and rush like devils, and want a deal of riding; but an Irishman likes that."

"I do not dislike it particularly."

"I like it. I prefer to have something to do on horseback. When a man tells me that a horse is an arm-chair, I always tell him to put the brute into his bedroom. Mind you come. The house I stay at is called the Willingford Bull, and it 's just four miles from Peterborough." Phineas swore that he would go down and ride the pulling horses, and then took his leave, earnestly advising Lord Chiltern, as he went, to keep the appointment proposed by his father.

When the morning came, at half-past eleven, the son, who had been standing for half an hour with his back to the fire in the large gloomy dining-room, suddenly rang the bell. "Tell the Earl," he said to the servant, "that I am here and will go to him if he wishes it." The servant came back, and said that the Earl was waiting. Then Lord Chiltern strode after the man into his father's room.

"Oswald," said the father, "I have sent for you because I think it may be as well to speak to you on some business. Will you sit down?" Lord Chiltern sat down, but did not answer a word. "I feel very unhappy about your sister's fortune," said the Earl.

"So do I,—very unhappy. We can raise the money between us, and pay her to-morrow, if you please it."

"It was in opposition to my advice that she paid your debts."

"And in opposition to mine too."

"I told her that I would not pay them, and were I

to give her back to-morrow, as you say, the money that she has so used, I should be stultifying myself. But I will do so on one condition. I will join with you in raising the money for your sister on one condition."

"What is that?"

"Laura tells me,—indeed she has told me often,—that you are attached to Violet Effingham."

"But Violet Effingham, my lord, is unhappily not attached to me."

"I do not know how that may be. Of course I cannot say. I have never taken the liberty of interrogating her upon the subject."

"Even you, my lord, could hardly have done that."

"What do you mean by that? I say that I never have," said the Earl angrily.

"I simply mean that even you could hardly have asked Miss Effingham such a question. I have asked her, and she has refused me."

"But girls often do that, and yet accept afterwards the men whom they have refused. Laura tells me that she believes that Violet would consent if you pressed your suit."

"Laura knows nothing about it, my lord."

"There you are probably wrong. Laura and Violet are very close friends, and have no doubt discussed this matter among them. At any rate, it may be as well that you should hear what I have to say. Of course I shall not interfere myself. There is no ground on which I can do so with propriety."

"None whatever," said Lord Chiltern.

The Earl became very angry, and nearly broke down in his anger. He paused for a moment, feeling disposed to tell his son to go and never to see him again.

But he gulped down his wrath, and went on with his speech. "My meaning, sir, is this;—that I have so great faith in Violet Effingham, that I would receive her acceptance of your hand as the only proof which would be convincing to me of amendment in your mode of life. If she were to do so, I would join with you in raising money to pay your sister, would make some further sacrifice with reference to an income for you and your wife, and——would make you both welcome to Saulsby,—if you chose to come." The Earl's voice hesitated much, and became almost tremulous as he made the last proposition. And his eyes had fallen away from his son's gaze, and he had bent a little over the table, and was moved. But he recovered himself at once, and added, with all proper dignity, "If you have anything to say I shall be glad to hear it."

"All your offers would be nothing, my lord, if I did not like the girl."

"I should not ask you to marry a girl if you did not like her, as you call it."

"But as to Miss Effingham, it happens that our wishes jump together. I have asked her, and she has refused me. I don't even know where to find her to ask her again. If I went to Lady Baldock's house the servants would not let me in."

"And whose fault is that?"

"Yours, partly, my lord. You have told everybody that I am the devil, and now all the old women believe it."

"I never told anybody so."

"I 'll tell you what I 'll do. I will go down to Lady Baldock's to-day. I suppose she is at Baddingham. And if I can get speech of Miss Effingham——"

"Miss Effingham is not at Baddingham. Miss Effingham is staying with your sister in Grosvenor Place. I saw her yesterday."

"She is in London?"

"I tell you that I saw her yesterday."

"Very well, my lord. Then I will do the best I can. Laura will tell you of the result."

The father would have given the son some advice as to the mode in which he should put forward his claim upon Violet's hand, but the son would not wait to hear it. Choosing to presume that the conference was over, he went back to the room in which he kept his dumb-bells, and for a minute or two went to work at his favourite exercise. But he soon put the dumb-bells down, and began to prepare himself for his work. If this thing was to be done, it might as well be done at once. He looked out of his window, and saw that the streets were in a mess of slush. White snow was becoming black mud, as it will do in London; and the violence of frost was giving way to the horrors of thaw. All would be soft and comparatively pleasant in Northamptonshire on the following morning, and if everything went right he would breakfast at the Willingford Bull. He would go down by the hunting train, and be at the inn by ten. The meet was only six miles distant, and all would be pleasant. He would do this whatever might be the result of his work to-day;—but in the meantime he would go and do his work. He had a cab called, and within half an hour of the time at which he had left his father he was at the door of his sister's house in Grosvenor Place. The servants told him that the ladies were at lunch. "I can't eat lunch," he said. "Tell them that I am in the drawing-room."

"He has come to see you," said Lady Laura, as soon as the servant had left the room.

"I hope not," said Violet.

"Do not say that."

"But I do say it. I hope he has not come to see me;—that is, not to see me specially. Of course I cannot pretend not to know what you mean."

"He may think it civil to call if he has heard that you are in town," said Lady Laura, after a pause.

"If it be only that, I will be civil in return;—as sweet as May to him. If it be really only that, and if I were sure of it, I should be really glad to see him." Then they finished their lunch, and Lady Laura got up and led the way to the drawing-room.

"I hope you remember," said she, gravely, "that you might be a saviour to him."

"I do not believe in girls being saviours to men. It is the man who should be the saviour to the girl. If I marry at all, I have the right to expect that protection shall be given to me,—not that I shall have to give it."

"Violet, you are determined to misrepresent what I mean."

Lord Chiltern was walking about the room, and did not sit down when they entered. The ordinary greetings took place, and Miss Effingham made some remark about the frost. "But it seems to be going," she said, "and I suppose that you will soon be at work again?"

"Yes;—I shall hunt to-morrow," said Lord Chiltern.

"And the next day, and the next, and the next," said Violet, "till about the middle of April;—and then your period of misery will begin!"

"Exactly," said Lord Chiltern. "I have nothing but hunting that I can call an occupation."

"Why don't you make one?" said his sister.

"I mean to do so, if it be possible. Laura, would you mind leaving me and Miss Effingham alone for a few minutes?"

Lady Laura got up, and so also did Miss Effingham. "For what purpose?" said the latter. "It cannot be for any good purpose."

"At any rate I wish it, and I will not harm you."

Lady Laura was now going, but paused before she reached the door. "Laura, will you do as I ask you?" said the brother. Then Lady Laura went.

"It was not that I feared you would harm me, Lord Chiltern," said Violet.

"No;—I know it was not. But what I say is always said awkwardly. An hour ago I did not know that you were in town, but when I was told the news I came at once. My father told me."

"I am so glad that you see your father."

"I have not spoken to him for months before, and probably may not speak to him for months again. But there is one point, Violet, on which he and I agree."

"I hope there will soon be many."

"It is possible,—but I fear not probable. Look here, Violet,"—and he looked at her with all his eyes, till it seemed to her that he was all eyes, so great was the intensity of his gaze;—"I should scorn myself were I to permit myself to come before you with a plea for your favour founded on my father's whims. My father is unreasonable, and has been very unjust to me. He has ever believed evil of me, and has believed it often when all the world knew that he was wrong. I

care little for being reconciled to a father who has been so cruel to me."

"He loves me dearly, and is my friend. I would rather that you should not speak against him to me."

"You will understand, at least, that I am asking nothing from you because he wishes it. Laura probably has told you that you may make things straight by becoming my wife."

"She has,—certainly, Lord Chiltern."

"It is an argument that she should never have used. It is an argument to which you should not listen for a moment. Make things straight indeed! Who can tell? There would be very little made straight by such a marriage, if it were not that I loved you. Violet, that is my plea, and my only one. I love you so well that I do believe that if you took me I should return to the old ways, and become as other men are, and be in time as respectable, as stupid,—and perhaps as ill-natured as old Lady Baldock herself."

"My poor aunt!"

"You know she says worse things of me than that. Now, dearest, you have heard all that I have to say to you." As he spoke he came close to her, and put out his hand, but she did not touch it. "I have no other argument to use,—not a word more to say. As I came here in the cab I was turning it over in my mind that I might find what best I should say. But, after all, there is nothing more to be said than that."

"The words make no difference," she replied.

"Not unless they be so uttered as to force a belief. I do love you. I know no other reason but that why you should be my wife. I have no other excuse to

offer for coming to you again. You are the one thing in the world that to me has any charm. Can you be surprised that I should be persistent in asking for it?" He was looking at her still with the same gaze, and there seemed to be a power in his eye from which she could not escape. He was still standing with his right hand out, as though expecting, or at least hoping, that her hand might be put into his.

"How am I to answer you?" she said.

"With your love, if you can give it to me. Do you remember how you swore once that you would love me forever and always?"

"You should not remind me of that. I was a child then,—a naughty child," she added, smiling; "and was put to bed for what I did on that day."

"Be a child still."

"Ah, if we but could!"

"And have you no other answer to make me?"

"Of course I must answer you. You are entitled to an answer. Lord Chiltern, I am sorry that I cannot give you the love for which you ask."

"Never?"

"Never."

"Is it myself personally, or what you have heard of me, that is so hateful to you?"

"Nothing is hateful to me. I have never spoken of hate. I shall always feel the strongest regard for my old friend and playfellow. But there are many things which a woman is bound to consider before she allows herself so to love a man that she can consent to become his wife."

"Allow herself! Then it is a matter entirely of calculation."

"I suppose there should be some thought in it, Lord Chiltern."

There was now a pause, and the man's hand was at last allowed to drop, as there came no response to the proffered grasp. He walked once or twice across the room before he spoke again, and then he stopped himself closely opposite to her.

"I shall never try again," he said.

"It will be better so," she replied.

"There is something to me unmanly in a man's persecuting a girl. Just tell Laura, will you, that it is all over; and she may as well tell my father. Good-bye."

She then tendered her hand to him, but he did not take it,—probably did not see it, and at once left the room and the house.

"And yet I believe you love him," Lady Laura said to her friend in her anger, when they discussed the matter immediately on Lord Chiltern's departure.

"You have no right to say that, Laura."

"I have a right to my belief, and I do believe it. I think you love him, and that you lack the courage to risk yourself in trying to save him."

"Is a woman bound to marry a man if she loves him?"

"Yes, she is," replied Lady Laura impetuously, without thinking of what she was saying; "that is, if she be convinced that she also is loved."

"Whatever be the man's character;—whatever be the circumstances? Must she do so, whatever friends may say to the contrary? Is there to be no prudence in marriage?"

"There may be a great deal too much prudence," said Lady Laura.

"That is true. There is certainly too much prudence if a woman marries prudently, but without love." Violet intended by this no attack upon her friend,—had not had present in her mind at the moment any idea of Lady Laura's special prudence in marrying Mr. Kennedy; but Lady Laura felt it keenly, and knew at once that an arrow had been shot which had wounded her.

"We shall get nothing," she said, "by descending to personalities with each other."

"I meant none, Laura."

"I suppose it is always hard," said Lady Laura, "for any one person to judge altogether of the mind of another. If I have said anything severe of your refusal of my brother, I retract it. I only wish that it could have been otherwise."

Lord Chiltern, when he left his sister's house, walked through the slush and dirt to a haunt of his in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden, and there he remained through the whole afternoon and evening. A certain Captain Clutterbuck joined him, and dined with him. He told nothing to Captain Clutterbuck of his sorrow, but Captain Clutterbuck could see that he was unhappy.

"Let 's have another bottle of 'cham,'" said Captain Clutterbuck, when their dinner was nearly over. "'Cham' is the only thing to screw one up when one is down a peg."

"You can have what you like," said Lord Chiltern; "but I shall have some brandy and water."

"The worst of brandy and water is, that one gets tired of it before the night is over," said Captain Clutterbuck.

Nevertheless, Lord Chiltern did go down to Peterborough the next day by the hunting train, and rode his horse Bonebreaker so well in that famous run from Sutton Springs to Gidding that after the run young Piles,—of the house of Piles, Sarsnet & Gingham,—offered him three hundred pounds for the animal.

"He is n't worth above fifty," said Lord Chiltern.

"But I 'll give you the three hundred," said Piles.

"You could n't ride him if you 'd got him," said Lord Chiltern.

"Oh, could n't I!" said Piles. But Mr. Piles did not continue the conversation, contenting himself with telling his friend Grogram that that red devil Chiltern was as drunk as a lord.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DEBATE ON THE BALLOT.

PHINEAS took his seat in the House with a consciousness of much inward trepidation of heart on that night of the ballot debate. After leaving Lord Chiltern he went down to his club and dined alone. Three or four men came and spoke to him; but he could not talk to them at his ease, nor did he quite know what they were saying to him. He was going to do something which he longed to achieve, but the very idea of which, now that it was so near to him, was a terror to him. To be in the House and not to speak would, to his thinking, be a disgraceful failure. Indeed, he could not continue to keep his seat unless he spoke. He had been put there that he might speak. He would speak. Of course he would speak. Had he not already been conspicuous almost as a boy orator? And yet, at this moment he did not know whether he was eating mutton or beef, or who was standing opposite to him and talking to him, so much was he in dread of the ordeal which he had prepared for himself. As he went down to the House after dinner, he almost made up his mind that it would be a good thing to leave London by one of the night mail trains. He felt himself to be stiff and stilted as he walked, and that his clothes were uneasy to him. When he turned into Westminster Hall he regretted more keenly than ever he had done that he had seceded from the keeping of Mr. Low. He could, he

thought, have spoken very well in court, and would there have learned that self-confidence which now failed him so terribly. It was, however, too late to think of that. He could only go in and take his seat.

He went in and took his seat, and the chamber seemed to him to be mysteriously large, as though benches were crowded over benches, and galleries over galleries. He had been long enough in the House to have lost the original awe inspired by the Speaker and the clerks of the House, by the row of Ministers, and by the unequalled importance of the place. On ordinary occasions he could saunter in and out, and whisper at his ease to a neighbour. But on this occasion he went direct to the bench on which he ordinarily sat, and began at once to rehearse to himself his speech. He had in truth been doing this all day, in spite of the effort that he had made to rid himself of all memory of the occasion. He had been collecting the heads of his speech while Mr. Low had been talking to him, and refreshing his quotations in the presence of Lord Chiltern and the dumb-bells. He had taxed his memory and his intellect with various tasks, which, as he feared, would not adjust themselves one with another. He had learned the headings of his speech,—so that one heading might follow the other, and nothing be forgotten. And he had learned verbatim the words which he intended to utter under each heading,—with a hope that if any one compact part should be destroyed or injured in its compactness by treachery of memory, or by the course of the debate, each other compact part might be there in its entirety, ready for use;—or at least so many of the compact parts as treachery of memory and the accidents of the debate might leave

to him; so that his speech might be like a vessel, water-tight in its various compartments, that would float by the buoyancy of its stern and bow, even though the hold should be waterlogged. But this use of his composed words, even though he should be able to carry it through, would not complete his work;—for it would be his duty to answer in some sort those who had gone before him, and in order to do this he must be able to insert, without any pre-arrangement of words or ideas, little intercalatory parts between those compact masses of argument with which he had been occupying himself for many laborious hours. As he looked round upon the House and perceived that everything was dim before him, that all his original awe of the House had returned, and with it a present quaking fear that made him feel the pulsations of his own heart, he became painfully aware that the task he had prepared for himself was too great. He should, on this the occasion of his rising to his maiden legs, have either prepared for himself a short general speech, which could indeed have done little for his credit in the House, but which might have served to carry off the novelty of the thing, and have introduced him to the sound of his own voice within those walls,—or he should have trusted to what his wit and spirit would produce for him on the spur of the moment, and not have burdened himself with a huge exercise of memory. During the presentation of a few petitions he tried to repeat to himself the first of his compact parts,—a compact part on which, as it might certainly be brought into use let the debate have gone as it might, he had expended great care. He had flattered himself that there was something of real strength in his words as he repeated

them to himself in the comfortable seclusion of his own room, and he had made them so ready to his tongue that he thought it to be impossible that he should forget even an intonation. Now he found that he could not remember the first phrases without unloosing and looking at a small roll of paper which he held furtively in his hand. What was the good of looking at it? He would forget it again in the next moment. He had intended to satisfy the most eager of his friends, and to astound his opponents. As it was, no one would be satisfied,—and none astounded but they who had trusted in him.

The debate began, and if the leisure afforded by a long and tedious speech could have served him, he might have had leisure enough. He tried at first to follow all that this advocate for the ballot might say, hoping thence to acquire the impetus of strong interest; but he soon wearied of the work, and began to long that the speech might be ended, although the period of his own martyrdom would thereby be brought nearer to him. At half-past seven so many members had deserted their seats, that Phineas began to think that he might be saved all further pains by a "count out." He reckoned the members present and found that they were below the mystic forty,—first by two, then by four, by five, by seven, and at one time by eleven. It was not for him to ask the Speaker to count the House, but he wondered that no one else should do so. And yet, as the idea of this termination to the night's work came upon him, and as he thought of his lost labour, he almost took courage again,—almost dreaded rather than wished for the interference of some malicious member. But there was no malicious member then

present, or else it was known that Lords of the Treasury and Lords of the Admiralty would flock in during the Speaker's ponderous counting,—and thus the slow length of the ballot-lover's verbosity was permitted to evolve itself without interruption. At eight o'clock he had completed his catalogue of illustrations, and immediately Mr. Monk rose from the Treasury Bench to explain the grounds on which the Government must decline to support the motion before the House.

Phineas was aware that Mr. Monk intended to speak, and was aware also that his speech would be very short. "My idea is," he had said to Phineas, "that every man possessed of the franchise should dare to have and to express a political opinion of his own; that otherwise the franchise is not worth having; and that men will learn that when all so dare, no evil can come from such daring. As the ballot would make any courage of that kind unnecessary, I dislike the ballot. I shall confine myself to that, and leave the illustration to younger debaters." Phineas also had been informed that Mr. Turnbull would reply to Mr. Monk, with the purpose of crushing Mr. Monk into dust, and Phineas had prepared his speech with something of an intention of subsequently crushing Mr. Turnbull. He knew, however, that he could not command his opportunity. There was the chapter of accidents to which he must accommodate himself; but such had been his programme for the evening.

Mr. Monk made his speech,—and though he was short, he was very fiery and energetic. Quick as lightning words of wrath and scorn flew from him, in which he painted the cowardice, the meanness, the falsehood of the ballot. "The ballot-box," he said, "was the

grave of all true political opinion." Though he spoke hardly for ten minutes, he seemed to say more than enough, ten times enough, to slaughter the argument of the former speaker. At every hot word as it fell Phineas was driven to regret that a paragraph of his own was taken away from him, and that his choicest morsels of standing ground were being cut from under his feet. When Mr. Monk sat down, Phineas felt that Mr. Monk had said all that he, Phineas Finn, had intended to say.

Then Mr. Turnbull rose slowly from the bench below the gangway. With a speaker so frequent and so famous as Mr. Turnbull no hurry is necessary. He is sure to have his opportunity. The Speaker's eye is ever travelling to the accustomed spots. Mr. Turnbull rose slowly and began his oration very mildly. "There was nothing," he said, "that he admired so much as the poetic imagery and the high-flown sentiment of his right honourable friend the member for West Bromwich,"—Mr. Monk sat for West Bromwich,—"unless it were the stubborn facts and unanswered arguments of his honourable friend who had brought forward this motion." Then Mr. Turnbull proceeded after his fashion to crush Mr. Monk. He was very prosaic, very clear both in voice and language, very harsh, and very unscrupulous. He and Mr. Monk had been joined together in politics for over twenty years;—but one would have thought, from Mr. Turnbull's words, that they had been the bitterest of enemies. Mr. Monk was taunted with his office, taunted with his desertion of the liberal party, taunted with his ambition,—and taunted with his lack of ambition. "I once thought," said Mr. Turnbull,—"nay, not long ago I thought, that he and I would

have fought this battle for the people, shoulder to shoulder, and knee to knee;—but he has preferred that the knee next to his own shall wear a garter, and that the shoulder which supports him shall be decked with a blue ribbon,—as shoulders, I presume, are decked in those closet conferences which are called Cabinets."

Just after this, while Mr. Turnbull was still going on with a variety of illustrations drawn from the United States, Barrington Erle stepped across the benches up to the place where Phineas was sitting, and whispered a few words into his ear. "Bonteen is prepared to answer Turnbull, and wishes to do it. I told him that I thought you should have the opportunity, if you wish it." Phineas was not ready with a reply to Erle at the spur of the moment. "Somebody told me," continued Erle, "that you had said that you would like to speak to-night."

"So I did," said Phineas.

"Shall I tell Bonteen that you will do it?"

The chamber seemed to swim round before our hero's eyes. Mr. Turnbull was still going on with his clear, loud, unpleasant voice, but there was no knowing how long he might go on. Upon Phineas, if he should now consent, might devolve the duty, within ten minutes, within three minutes, of rising there before a full House to defend his great friend, Mr. Monk, from a gross personal attack. Was it fit that such a novice as he should undertake such a work as that? Were he to do so, all that speech which he had prepared, with its various self-floating parts, must go for nothing. The task was exactly that which, of all tasks, he would best like to have accomplished, and to have accomplished well. But if he should fail! And he felt that he

would fail. For such work a man should have all his senses about him,—his full courage, perfect confidence, something almost approaching to contempt for listening opponents, and nothing of fear in regard to listening friends. He should be as a cock in his own farmyard, master of all the circumstances around him. But Phineas Finn had not even as yet heard the sound of his own voice in that room. At this moment, so confused was he, that he did not know where sat Mr. Mildmay, and where Mr. Daubeny. All was confused, and there arose as it were a sound of waters in his ears, and a feeling as of a great hell around him. "I had rather wait," he said at last. "Bonteen had better reply." Barrington Erle looked into his face, and then stepping back across the benches, told Mr. Bonteen that the opportunity was his.

Mr. Turnbull continued speaking quite long enough to give poor Phineas time for repentance; but repentance was of no use. He had decided against himself, and his decision could not be reversed. He would have left the House, only it seemed to him that had he done so every one would look at him. He drew his hat down over his eyes, and remained in his place, hating Mr. Bonteen, hating Barrington Erle, hating Mr. Turnbull,—but hating no one so much as he hated himself. He had disgraced himself forever, and could never recover the occasion which he had lost.

Mr. Bonteen's speech was in no way remarkable. Mr. Monk, he said, had done the State good service by adding his wisdom and patriotism to the Cabinet. The sort of argument which Mr. Bonteen used to prove that a man who has gained credit as a legislator should in process of time become a member of the executive, is

trite and common, and was not used by Mr. Bonteen with any special force. Mr. Bonteen was glib of tongue, and possessed that familiarity with the place which poor Phineas had lacked so sorely. There was one moment, however, which was terrible to Phineas. As soon as Mr. Bonteen had shown the purpose for which he was on his legs, Mr. Monk looked round at Phineas, as though in reproach. He had expected that this work should fall into the hands of one who would perform it with more warmth of heart than could be expected from Mr. Bonteen. When Mr. Bonteen ceased, two or three other short speeches were made, and members fired off their little guns. Phineas having lost so great an opportunity, would not now consent to accept one that should be comparatively valueless. Then there came a division. The motion was lost by a large majority,—by any number you might choose to name, as Phineas had said to Lord Brentford; but in that there was no triumph to the poor wretch who had failed through fear, and who was now a coward in his own esteem.

He left the House alone, carefully avoiding all speech with any one. As he came out he had seen Laurence Fitzgibbon in the lobby, but he had gone on without pausing a moment, so that he might avoid his friend. And when he was out in the Palace Yard, where was he to go next? He looked at his watch, and found that it was just ten. He did not dare to go to his club, and it was impossible for him to go home and to bed. He was very miserable, and nothing would comfort him but sympathy. Was there any one who would listen to his abuse of himself, and would then answer him with kindly apologies for his own weakness?

Mrs. Bunce would do it if she knew how, but sympathy from Mrs. Bunce would hardly avail. There was but one person in the world to whom he could tell his own humiliation with any hope of comfort, and that person was Lady Laura Kennedy. Sympathy from any man would have been distasteful to him. He had thought for a moment of flinging himself at Mr. Monk's feet and telling all his weakness;—but he could not have endured pity even from Mr. Monk. It was not to be endured from any man.

He thought that Lady Laura Kennedy would be at home, and probably alone. He knew, at any rate, that he might be allowed to knock at her door, even at that hour. He had left Mr. Kennedy in the House, and there he would probably remain for the next hour. There was no man more constant than Mr. Kennedy in seeing the work of the day,—or of the night,—to its end. So Phineas walked up Victoria Street, and from thence into Grosvenor Place, and knocked at Lady Laura's door. "Yes; Lady Laura was at home; and alone." He was shown up into the drawing-room, and there he found Lady Laura waiting for her husband.

"So the great debate is over," she said, with as much of irony as she knew how to throw into the epithet.

"Yes; it is over."

"And what have they done,—those leviathans of the people?"

Then Phineas told her what was the majority.

"Is there anything the matter with you, Mr. Finn?" she said, looking at him suddenly. "Are you not well?"

"Yes; I am very well."

"Will you not sit down? There is something wrong, I know. What is it?"

"I have simply been the greatest idiot, the greatest coward, the most awkward ass that ever lived!"

"What do you mean?"

"I do not know why I should come to tell you of it at this hour at night, but I have come that I might tell you. Probably because there is no one else in the whole world who would not laugh at me."

"At any rate, I shall not laugh at you," said Lady Laura.

"But you will despise me."

"That I am sure I shall not do."

"You cannot help it. I despise myself. For years I have placed before myself the ambition of speaking in the House of Commons;—for years I have been thinking whether there would ever come to me an opportunity of making myself heard in that assembly, which I consider to be the first in the world. To-day the opportunity has been offered to me,—and, though the motion was nothing, the opportunity was great. The subject was one on which I was thoroughly prepared. The manner in which I was summoned was most flattering to me. I was especially called on to perform a task which was most congenial to my feelings;—and I declined because I was afraid."

"You had thought too much about it, my friend," said Lady Laura.

"Too much or too little, what does it matter?" replied Phineas, in despair. "There is the fact. I could not do it. Do you remember the story of Conachar in the 'Fair Maid of Perth;'—how his heart refused to give him blood enough to fight? He had been

suckled with the milk of a timid creature, and, though he could die, there was none of the strength of manhood in him. It is about the same thing with me, I take it."

"I do not think you are at all like Conachar," said Lady Laura.

"I am equally disgraced, and I must perish after the same fashion. I shall apply for the Chiltern Hundreds in a day or two."

"You will do nothing of the kind," said Lady Laura, getting up from her chair and coming towards him. "You shall not leave this room till you have promised me that you will do nothing of the kind. I do not know as yet what has occurred to-night; but I do know that that modesty which has kept you silent is more often a grace than a disgrace."

This was the kind of sympathy which he wanted. She drew her chair nearer to him, and then he explained to her as accurately as he could what had taken place in the House on this evening,—how he had prepared his speech, how he had felt that his preparation was vain, how he perceived from the course of the debate that if he spoke at all his speech must be very different from what he had first intended; how he had declined to take upon himself a task which seemed to require so close a knowledge of the ways of the House and of the temper of the men, as the defence of such a man as Mr. Monk. In accusing himself he, unconsciously, excused himself, and his excuse, in Lady Laura's ears, was more valid than his accusation.

"And you would give it all up for that?" she said.

"Yes; I think I ought."

"I have very little doubt but that you were right

in allowing Mr. Bonteen to undertake such a task. I should simply explain to Mr. Monk that you felt too keen an interest in his welfare to stand up as an untried member in his defence. It is not, I think, the work for a man who is not at home in the House. I am sure Mr. Monk will feel this, and I am quite certain that Mr. Kennedy will think that you have been right."

"I do not care what Mr. Kennedy may think."

"Why do you say that, Mr. Finn? That is not courteous."

"Simply because I care so much what Mr. Kennedy's wife may think. Your opinion is all in all to me,—only that I know you are too kind to me."

"He would not be too kind to you. He is never too kind to any one. He is justice itself."

Phineas, as he heard the tones of her voice, could not but feel that there was in Lady Laura's words something of an accusation against her husband.

"I hate justice," said Phineas. "I know that justice would condemn me. But love and friendship know nothing of justice. The value of love is that it overlooks faults, and forgives even crimes."

"I, at any rate," said Lady Laura, "will forgive the crime of your silence in the House. My strong belief in your success will not be in the least affected by what you tell me of your failure to-night. You must await another opportunity; and, if possible, you should be less anxious as to your own performance. There is Violet." As Lady Laura spoke the last words, there was the sound of a carriage stopping in the street, and the front door was immediately opened. "She is staying here, but has been dining with her uncle, Admiral

Effingham." Then Violet Effingham entered the room, rolled up in pretty white furs, and silk cloaks, and lace shawls. "Here is Mr. Finn, come to tell us of the debate about the ballot."

"I don't care twopence about the ballot," said Violet, as she put out her hand to Phineas. "Are we going to have a new iron fleet built? That 's the question."

"Sir Simeon has come out strong to-night," said Lady Laura.

"There is no political question of any importance except the question of the iron fleet," said Violet. "I am quite sure of that, and so, if Mr. Finn can tell me nothing about the iron fleet, I 'll go to bed."

"Mr. Kennedy will tell you everything when he comes home," said Phineas.

"Oh, Mr. Kennedy! Mr. Kennedy never tells one anything. I doubt whether Mr. Kennedy thinks that any woman knows the meaning of the British Constitution."

"Do you know what it means, Violet?" asked Lady Laura.

"To be sure I do. It is liberty to growl about the iron fleet, or the ballot, or the taxes, or the peers, or the bishops,—or anything else, except the House of Commons. That 's the British Constitution. Good night, Mr. Finn."

"What a beautiful creature she is!" said Phineas.

"Yes, indeed," said Lady Laura.

"And full of wit and grace and pleasantness. I do not wonder at your brother's choice."

It will be remembered that this was said on the day before Lord Chiltern had made his offer for the third time.

"Poor Oswald! he does not know as yet that she is in town."

After that Phineas went, not wishing to await the return of Mr. Kennedy. He had felt that Violet Effingham had come into the room just in time to remedy a great difficulty. He did not wish to speak of his love to a married woman,—to the wife of the man who called him friend,—to the woman who he felt sure would have rebuked him. But he could hardly have restrained himself had not Miss Effingham been there.

But as he went home he thought more of Miss Effingham than he did of Lady Laura; and I think that the voice of Miss Effingham had done almost as much towards comforting him as had the kindness of the other.

At any rate, he had been comforted.

CHAPTER XXI.

"DO BE PUNCTUAL."

ON the very morning after his failure in the House of Commons, when Phineas was reading in the Telegraph,—he took the Telegraph not from choice but for economy,—the words of that debate which he had heard and in which he should have taken a part, a most unwelcome visit was paid to him. It was near eleven, and the breakfast things were still on the table. He was at this time on a Committee of the House with reference to the use of potted peas in the army and navy, at which he sat once,—at a preliminary meeting, —and in reference to which he had already resolved that as he had failed so frightfully in debate, he would certainly do his duty to the utmost in the more easy but infinitely more tedious work of the Committee Room. The Committee met at twelve, and he intended to walk down to the Reform Club, and then to the House. He had just completed his reading of the debate and of the leaders in the Telegraph on the subject. He had told himself how little the writer of the article knew about Mr. Turnbull, how little about Mr. Monk, and how little about the people,—such being his ideas as to the qualifications of the writer of that leading article,—and was about to start. But Mrs. Bunce arrested him by telling him that there was a man below who wanted to see him.

"What sort of a man, Mrs. Bunce?"

"He ain't a gentleman, sir."

"Did he give his name?"

"He did not, sir; but I know it 's about money. I know the ways of them so well. I 've seen this one's face before somewhere."

You had better show him up," said Phineas. He knew well the business on which the man was come. The man wanted money for that bill which Laurence Fitzgibbon had sent afloat, and which Phineas had endorsed. Phineas had never as yet fallen so deeply into troubles of money as to make it necessary that he need refuse himself to any callers on that score, and he did not choose to do so now. Nevertheless he most heartily wished that he had left his lodgings for the club before the man had come. This was not the first he had heard of the bill being overdue and unpaid. The bill had been brought to him noted a month since, and then he had simply told the youth who brought it that he would see Mr. Fitzgibbon and have the matter settled. He had spoken to his friend Laurence, and Laurence had simply assured him that all should be made right in two days,—or, at furthest, by the end of a week. Since that time he had observed that his friend had been somewhat shy of speaking to him when no others were with them. Phineas would not have alluded to the bill had he and Laurence been alone together; but he had been quick enough to guess from his friend's manner that the matter was not settled. Now, no doubt, serious trouble was about to commence.

The visitor was a little man with grey hair and a white cravat, some sixty years of age, dressed in black, with a very decent hat,—which, on entering the room,

he at once put down on the nearest chair,—with reference to whom, any judge on the subject would have concurred at first sight in the decision pronounced by Mrs. Bunce, though none but a judge very well used to sift the causes of his own conclusions could have given the reasons for that early decision. "He ain't a gentleman," Mrs. Bunce had said. And the man certainly was not a gentleman. The old man in the white cravat was very neatly dressed, and carried himself without any of that humility which betrays one class of uncertified aspirants to gentility, or of that assumed arrogance which is at once fatal to another class. But, nevertheless, Mrs. Bunce had seen at a glance that he was not a gentleman,—had seen, moreover, that such a man could have come only upon one mission. She was right there too. The visitor had come about money.

"About this bill, Mr. Finn," said the visitor, proceeding to take out of his breast coat-pocket a rather large leathern case, as he advanced up towards the fire. "My name is Clarkson, Mr. Finn. If I may venture so far, I 'll take a chair."

"Certainly, Mr. Clarkson," said Phineas, getting up and pointing to a seat.

"Thankye, Mr. Finn, thankye. We shall be more comfortable doing business sitting, shan't we?" Whereupon the horrid little man drew himself close in to the fire, and spreading out his leathern case upon his knees, began to turn over one suspicious bit of paper after another, as though he were uncertain in what part of his portfolio lay this identical bit which he was seeking. He seemed to be quite at home, and to feel that there was no ground whatever for hurry in such

comfortable quarters. Phineas hated him at once,—with a hatred altogether unconnected with the difficulty which his friend Fitzgibbon had brought upon him.

"Here it is," said Mr. Clarkson at last, "Oh, dear me, dear me! the 3rd of November, and here we are in March! I did n't think it was so bad as this; I did n't indeed. This is very bad,—very bad! And for Parliament gents, too, who should be more punctual than anybody, because of the privilege. Should n't they now, Mr. Finn?"

"All men should be punctual, I suppose," said Phineas.

"Of course they should; of course they should. I always say to my gents, 'Be punctual, and I 'll do anything for you.' But, perhaps, Mr. Finn, you can hand me a cheque for this amount, and then you and I will begin square."

"Indeed I cannot, Mr. Clarkson."

"Not hand me a cheque for it!"

"Upon my word, no."

"That 's very bad;—very bad indeed. Then I suppose I must take the half, and renew for the remainder, though I don't like it;—I don't indeed."

"I can pay no part of that bill, Mr. Clarkson."

"Pay no part of it!" and Mr. Clarkson, in order that he might the better express his surprise, arrested his hand in the very act of poking his host's fire.

"If you 'll allow me, I 'll manage the fire," said Phineas, putting out his hand for the poker.

But Mr. Clarkson was fond of poking fires, and would not surrender the poker. "Pay no part of it!" he said again, holding the poker away from Phineas in his left hand. "Don't say that, Mr. Finn. Pray

don't say that. Don't drive me to be severe. I don't like to be severe with my gents. I 'll do anything, Mr. Finn, if you 'll only be punctual."

"The fact is, Mr. Clarkson, I have never had one penny of consideration for that bill, and——"

"Oh, Mr. Finn! oh, Mr. Finn!" and then Mr. Clarkson had his will of the fire.

"I never had one penny of consideration for that bill," continued Phineas. "Of course I don't deny my responsibility."

"No, Mr. Finn; you can't deny that. Here it is; —Phineas Finn,—and everybody knows you, because you 're a Parliament gent."

"I don't deny it. But I had no reason to suppose that I should be called upon for the money when I accommodated my friend, Mr. Fitzgibbon, and I have not got it. That is the long and the short of it. I must see him and take care that arrangements are made."

"Arrangements!"

"Yes, arrangements for settling the bill."

"He has n't got the money, Mr. Finn. You know that as well as I do."

"I know nothing about it, Mr. Clarkson."

"Oh yes, Mr. Finn; you know; you know."

"I tell you I know nothing about it," said Phineas, waxing angry.

"As to Mr. Fitzgibbon, he 's the pleasantest gent that ever lived. Is n't he now? I 've knowed him these ten years. I don't suppose that for ten years I 've been without his name in my pocket. But, bless you, Mr. Finn, there 's an end to everything. I should n't have looked at this bit of paper if it had n't

been for your signature. Of course not. You 're just beginning, and it 's natural you should want a little help. You 'll find me always ready, if you 'll only be punctual."

"I tell you again, sir, that I never had a shilling out of that for myself, and do not want any such help." Here Mr. Clarkson smiled sweetly. "I gave my name to my friend simply to oblige him."

"I like you Irish gents because you do hang together so close," said Mr. Clarkson.

"Simply to oblige him," continued Phineas. "As I said before, I know that I am responsible; but, as I said before also, I have not the means of taking up that bill. I will see Mr. Fitzgibbon, and let you know what we propose to do." Then Phineas got up from his seat and took his hat. It was full time that he should go down to his Committee. But Mr. Clarkson did not get up from his seat. "I 'm afraid I must ask you to leave me now, Mr. Clarkson, as I have business down at the House."

"Business at the House never presses, Mr. Finn," said Mr. Clarkson. "That 's the best of Parliament. I 've known Parliament gents this thirty years and more. Would you believe it,—I 've had a Prime Minister's name in that portfolio; that I have; and a Lord Chancellor's; that I have;—and an Archbishop's too. I know what Parliament is, Mr. Finn. Come, come; don't put me off with Parliament."

There he sat before the fire with his pouch open before him, and Phineas had no power of moving him. Could Phineas have paid him the money which was manifestly due to him on the bill, the man would of course have gone; but failing in that, Phineas could

not turn him out. There was a black cloud on the young member's brow, and great anger at his heart,—against Fitzgibbon rather than against the man who was sitting there before him. "Sir," he said, "it is really imperative that I should go. I am pledged to an appointment at the House at twelve, and it wants now only a quarter. I regret that your interview with me should be so unsatisfactory, but I can only promise you that I will see Mr. Fitzgibbon."

"And when shall I call again, Mr. Finn?"

"Perhaps I had better write to you," said Phineas.

"Oh dear, no," said Mr. Clarkson. "I should much prefer to look in. Looking in is always best. We can get to understand one another in that way. Let me see. I dare say you 're not particular. Suppose I say Sunday morning."

"Really, I could not see you on Sunday morning, Mr. Clarkson."

"Parliament gents ain't generally particular,—'specially not among the Catholics," pleaded Mr. Clarkson.

"I am always engaged on Sundays," said Phineas.

"Suppose we say Monday,—or Tuesday. Tuesday morning at eleven. And do be punctual, Mr. Finn. At Tuesday morning I 'll come, and then no doubt I shall find you ready." Whereupon Mr. Clarkson slowly put up his bills within his portfolio, and then, before Phineas knew where he was, had warmly shaken that poor dismayed member of Parliament by the hand. "Only do be punctual, Mr. Finn," he said, as he made his way down the stairs.

It was now twelve, and Phineas rushed off to a cab. He was in such a fervour of rage and misery that he

could hardly think of his position, or what he had better do, till he got into the Committee Room; and when there he could think of nothing else. He intended to go deeply into the question of potted peas, holding an equal balance between the assailed Government officers on the one hand, and the advocates of the potted peas on the other. The potters of the peas, who wanted to sell their article to the Crown, declared that an extensive,—perhaps we may say, an unlimited, —use of the article would save the whole army and navy from the scourges of scurvy, dyspepsia, and rheumatism, would be the best safeguard against typhus and other fevers, and would be an invaluable aid in all other maladies to which soldiers and sailors are peculiarly subject. The peas in question were grown on a large scale in Holstein, and their growth had been fostered with the special object of doing good to the British army and navy. The peas were so cheap that there would be a great saving in money,—and it really had seemed to many that the officials of the Horse Guards and the Admiralty had been actuated by some fiendish desire to deprive their men of salutary fresh vegetables, simply because they were of foreign growth. But the officials of the War Office and the Admiralty declared that the potted peas in question were hardly fit for swine. The motion for the Committee had been made by a gentleman of the Opposition, and Phineas had been put upon it as an independent member. He had resolved to give it all his mind, and, as far as he was concerned, to reach a just decision, in which there should be no favour shown to the Gover[illegible]de. New brooms are proverbial for thorough [illegible]n this Committee work Phineas was as yet [illegible]

But, unfortunately, on this day his mind was so harassed that he could hardly understand what was going on. It did not, perhaps, much signify, as the witnesses examined were altogether agricultural. They only proved the production of peas in Holstein,—a fact as to which Phineas had no doubt. The proof was naturally slow, as the evidence was given in German, and had to be translated into English. And the work of the day was much impeded by a certain member who unfortunately spoke German, who seemed to be fond of speaking German before his brethren of the Committee, and who was curious as to agriculture in Holstein generally. The chairman did not understand German, and there was a difficulty in checking this gentleman, and in making him understand that his questions were not relevant to the issue.

Phineas could not keep his mind during the whole afternoon from the subject of his misfortune. What should he do if this horrid man came to him once or twice a week? He certainly did owe the man the money. He must admit that to himself. The man no doubt was a dishonest knave who had discounted the bill probably at fifty per cent.; but, nevertheless, Phineas had made himself legally responsible for the amount. The privilege of the House prohibited him from arrest. He thought of that very often, but the thought only made him the more unhappy. Would it not be said, and might it not be said truly, that he had incurred this responsibility,—a responsibility which he was altogether unequal to answer,—because he was so protected? He did feel that a certain consciousness of his privilege had been present to him when he had put his name across the paper, and that there had been

dishonesty in that very consciousness. And of what service would his privilege be to him, if this man could harass every hour of his life? The man was to be with him again in a day or two, and when the appointment had been proposed, he, Phineas, had not dared to negative it. And how was he to escape? As for paying the bill, that with him was altogether impossible. The man had told him,—and he had believed the man,—that payment by Fitzgibbon was out of the question. And yet Fitzgibbon was the son of a peer, whereas he was only the son of a country doctor! Of course Fitzgibbon must make some effort,—some great effort,—and have the thing settled. Alas, alas! He knew enough of the world already to feel that the hope was vain.

He went down from the Committe Room into the House, and he dined at the House, and remained there until eight or nine at night; but Fitzgibbon did not come. He then went to the Reform Club, but he was not there. Both at the club and in the House many men spoke to him about the debate of the previous night, expressing surprise that he had not spoken, —making him more and more wretched. He saw Mr. Monk, but Mr. Monk was walking arm in arm with his colleague, Mr. Palliser, and Phineas could do no more than just speak to them. He thought that Mr. Monk's nod of recognition was very cold. That might be fancy, but it certainly was a fact that Mr. Monk only nodded to him. He would tell Mr. Monk the truth, and then, if Mr. Monk chose to quarrel with him, he at any rate would take no step to renew their friendship.

From the Reform Club he went to the Shakspeare,

a smaller club to which Fitzgibbon belonged,—and of which Phineas much wished to become a member,—and to which he knew that his friend resorted when he wished to enjoy himself thoroughly, and to be at ease in his inn. Men at the Shakspeare could do as they pleased. There were no politics there, no fashion, no stiffness, and no rules,—so men said; but that was hardly true. Everybody called everybody by his Christian name, and members smoked all over the house. They who did not belong to the Shakspeare thought it an Elysium upon earth; and they who did, believed it to be among Pandemoniums the most pleasant. Phineas called at the Shakspeare, and was told by the porter that Mr. Fitzgibbon was upstairs. He was shown into the strangers' room, and in five minutes his friend came down to him.

"I want you to come down to the Reform with me," said Phineas.

"By jingo, my dear fellow, I 'm in the middle of a rubber of whist."

"There has been a man with me about that bill."

"What;—Clarkson?"

"Yes, Clarkson," said Phineas.

"Don't mind him," said Fitzgibbon.

"That 's nonsense. How am I to help minding him? I must mind him. He is coming to me again on Tuesday morning."

"Don't see him."

"How can I help seeing him?"

"Make them say you 're not at home."

"He has made an appointment. He has told me that he will never leave me alone. He 'll be the death of me if this is not settled."

"It shall be settled, my dear fellow. I 'll see about it. I 'll see about it and write you a line. You must excuse me now, because those fellows are waiting I 'll have it all arranged."

Again as Phineas went home he thoroughly wished that he had never seceded from Mr. Low.

CHAPTER XXII.

LADY BALDOCK AT HOME.

ABOUT the middle of March Lady Baldock came up from Baddingham to London, coerced into doing so, as Violet Effingham declared, in thorough opposition to all her own tastes, by the known wishes of her friends and relatives. Her friends and relatives, so Miss Effingham insinuated, were unanimous in wishing that Lady Baldock should remain at Baddingham Park, and therefore,—that wish having been indiscreetly expressed,—she had put herself to great inconvenience, and had come to London in March. "Gustavus will go mad," said Violet to Lady Laura. The Gustavus in question was the Lord Baldock of the present generation, Miss Effingham's Lady Baldock being the peer's mother. "Why does not Lord Baldock take a house himself?" asked Lady Laura. "Don't you know, my dear," Violet answered, "how much we Baddingham people think of money? We don't like being vexed and driven mad, but even that is better than keeping up two households." As regarded Violet, the injury arising from Lady Baldock's early migration was very great, for she was thus compelled to move from Grosvenor Place to Lady Baldock's house in Berkeley Square. "As you are so fond of being in London, Augusta and I have made up our minds to come up before Easter," Lady Baldock had written to her.

"I shall go to her now," Violet had said to her friend, "because I have not quite made up my mind as to what I will do for the future."

"Marry Oswald, and be your own mistress."

"I mean to be my own mistress without marrying Oswald, though I don't see my way quite clearly as yet. I think I shall set up a little house of my own, and let the world say what it pleases. I suppose they could n't make me out to be a lunatic."

"I should n't wonder if they were to try," said Lady Laura.

"They could not prevent me in any other way. But I am in the dark as yet, and so I shall be obedient and go to my aunt."

Miss Effingham went to Berkeley Square, and Phineas Finn was introduced to Lady Baldock. He had been often in Grosvenor Place, and had seen Violet frequently. Mr. Kennedy gave periodical dinners,—once a week,—to which everybody went who could get an invitation; and Phineas had been a guest more than once. Indeed, in spite of his miseries he had taken to dining out a good deal, and was popular as an eater of dinners. He could talk when wanted, and did not talk too much, was pleasant in manners and appearance, and had already achieved a certain recognised position in London life. Of those who knew him intimately, not one in twenty were aware from whence he came, what was his parentage, or what his means of living. He was a member of Parliament, a friend of Mr. Kennedy's, was intimate with Mr. Monk, though an Irishman did not as a rule herd with other Irishman, and was the right sort of person to have at your house. Some people said he was a cousin of

Lord Brentford's, and others declared that he was Lord Chiltern's earliest friend. There he was, however, with a position gained, and even Lady Baldock asked him to her house.

Lady Baldock had evenings. People went to her house, and stood about the room and on the stairs, talked to each other for half an hour, and went away. In these March days there was no crowding, but still there was always enough of people there to show that Lady Baldock was successful. Why people should have gone to Lady Baldock's I cannot explain;—but there are houses to which people go without any reason. Phineas received a little card asking him to go, and he always went.

"I think you like my friend, Mr. Finn," Lady Laura said to Miss Effingham, after the first of these evenings.

"Yes, I do. I like him decidedly."

"So do I. I should hardly have thought that you would have taken a fancy to him."

"I hardly know what you call taking a fancy," said Violet. "I am not quite sure I like to be told that I have taken a fancy for a young man."

"I mean no offence, my dear."

"Of course you don't. But, to speak the truth, I think I have rather taken a fancy to him. There is just enough of him, but not too much. I don't mean materially,—in regard to his inches; but as to his mental belongings. I hate a stupid man who can't talk to me, and I hate a clever man who talks me down. I don't like a man who is too lazy to make any effort to shine; but I particularly dislike the man who is always striving for effect. I abominate a humble man, but yet I love to perceive that a man acknowl-

edges the superiority of my sex, and youth, and all that kind of thing."

"You want to be flattered without plain flattery."

"Of course I do. A man who would tell me that I am pretty, unless he is over seventy, ought to be kicked out of the room. But a man who can't show me that he thinks me so without saying a word about it, is a lout. Now in all those matters, your friend, Mr. Finn, seems to know what he is about. In other words, he makes himself pleasant, and, therefore, one is glad to see him."

"I suppose you do not mean to fall in love with him?"

"Not that I know of, my dear. But when I do, I 'll be sure to give you notice."

I fear that there was more of earnestness in Lady Laura's last question than Miss Effingham had supposed. She had declared to herself over and over again that she had never been in love with Phineas Finn. She had acknowledged to herself, before Mr. Kennedy had asked her hand in marriage, that there had been danger,—that she could have learned to love the man if such love would not have been ruinous to her,—that the romance of such a passion would have been pleasant to her. She had gone farther than this, and had said to herself that she would have given way to that romance, and would have been ready to accept such love if offered to her, had she not put it out of her own power to marry a poor man by her generosity to her brother. Then she had thrust the thing aside, and had clearly understood,—she thought that she had clearly understood,—that life for her must be a matter of business. Was it not the case with nine out of every

ten among mankind, with nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand, that life must be a matter of business and not of romance? Of course she could not marry Mr. Finn, knowing, as she did, that neither of them had a shilling. Of all men in the world she esteemed Mr. Kennedy the most, and when these thoughts were passing through her mind, she was well aware that he would ask her to be his wife. Had she not resolved that she would accept the offer, she would not have gone to Loughlinter. Having put aside all romance as unfitted to her life, she could, she thought, do her duty as Mr. Kennedy's wife. She would teach herself to love him. Nay,—she had taught herself to love him. She was at any rate so sure of her own heart that she would never give her husband cause to rue the confidence he placed in her. And yet there was something sore within her when she thought that Phineas Finn was becoming fond of Violet Effingham.

It was Lady Baldock's second evening, and Phineas came to the house at about eleven o'clock. At this time he had encountered a second and a third interview with Mr. Clarkson, and had already failed in obtaining any word of comfort from Laurence Fitzgibbon about the bill. It was clear enough now that Laurence felt that they were both made safe by their privilege, and that Mr. Clarkson should be treated as you treat the organ-grinders. They are a nuisance and must be endured. But the nuisance is not so great but what you can live in comfort,—if only you are not too sore as to the annoyance. "My dear fellow," Laurence had said to him, "I have had Clarkson almost living in my rooms. He used to drink nearly a pint of sherry a day for me. All I looked to was that I did n't live there at the

same time. If you wish it, I 'll send in the sherry." This was very bad, and Phineas tried to quarrel with his friend; but he found that it was difficult to quarrel with Laurence Fitzgibbon.

But though on this side Phineas was very miserable, on another side he had obtained great comfort. Mr. Monk and he were better friends than ever. "As to what Turnbull says about me in the House," Mr. Monk had said, laughing; "he and I understand each other perfectly. I should like to see you on your legs, but it is just as well, perhaps, that you have deferred it. We shall have the real question on immediately after Easter, and then you 'll have plenty of opportunities." Phineas had explained how he had attempted, how he had failed, and how he had suffered;—and Mr. Monk had been generous in his sympathy. "I know all about it," said he, "and have gone through it all myself. The more respect you feel for the House, the more satisfaction you will have in addressing it when you have mastered this difficulty."

The first person who spoke to Phineas at Lady Baldock's was Miss Fitzgibbon, Laurence's sister. Aspasia Fitzgibbon was a warm woman as regarded money, and as she was moreover a most discreet spinster, she was made welcome by Lady Baldock, in spite of the well-known iniquities of her male relatives. "Mr. Finn," said she, "how d' ye do? I want to say a word to ye. Just come here into the corner." Phineas, not knowing how to escape, did retreat into the corner with Miss Fitzgibbon. "Tell me now, Mr. Finn;—have ye been lending money to Larrence?"

"No; I have lent him no money," said Phineas, much astonished by the question.

"Don't. That 's my advice to ye. Don't. On any other matter Larrence is the best creature in the world,—but he 's bad to lend money to. You ain't in any hobble with him, then?"

"Well;—nothing to speak of. What makes you ask?"

"Then you are in a hobble? Dear, dear! I never saw such a man as Larrence;—never. Good-bye. I would n't do it again, if I were you;—that 's all." Then Miss Fitzgibbon came out of the corner and made her way downstairs.

Phineas immediately afterwards came across Miss Effingham. "I did not know," said she, "that you and the divine Aspasia were such close allies."

"We are the dearest friends in the world, but she has taken my breath away now."

"May a body be told how she has done that?" Violet asked.

"Well, no; I 'm afraid not, even though the body be Miss Effingham. It was a profound secret;—really a secret concerning a third person, and she began about it just as though she were speaking about the weather!"

"How charming! I do so like her. You have n't heard, have you, that Mr. Rattler proposed to her the other day?"

"No!"

"But he did;—at least, so she tells everybody. She said she 'd take him if he would promise to get her brother's salary doubled."

"Did she tell you?"

"No; not me. And of course I don't believe a word of it. I suppose Barrington Erle made up the story. Are you going out of town next week, Mr.

Finn?" The week next to this was Easter-week. "I heard you were going into Northamptonshire."

"From Lady Laura?"

"Yes;—from Lady Laura."

"I intend to spend three days with Lord Chiltern at Willingford. It is an old promise. I am going to ride his horses,—that is, if I am able to ride them."

"Take care what you are about, Mr. Finn;—they say his horses are so dangerous!"

"I 'm rather good at falling, I flatter myself."

"I know that Lord Chiltern rides anything he can sit, so long as it is some animal that nobody else will ride. It was always so with him. He is so odd; is he not?"

Phineas knew, of course, that Lord Chiltern had more than once asked Violet Effingham to be his wife,—and he believed that she, from her intimacy with Lady Laura, must know that he knew it. He had also heard Lady Laura express a very strong wish that, in spite of these refusals, Violet might even yet become her brother's wife. And Phineas also knew that Violet Effingham was becoming, in his own estimation, the most charming woman of his acquaintance. How was he to talk to her about Lord Chiltern?

"He is odd," said Phineas; "but he is an excellent fellow,—whom his father altogether misunderstands."

"Exactly,—just so; I am so glad to hear you say that,—you who have never had the misfortune to have anything to do with a bad set. Why don't you tell Lord Brentford? Lord Brentford would listen to you."

"To me?"

"Yes;—of course he would,—for you are just the

link that is wanting. You are Chiltern's intimate friend, and you are also the friend of big-wigs and Cabinet Ministers."

"Lord Brentford would put me down at once if I spoke to him on such a subject."

"I am sure he would not. You are too big to be put down, and no man can really dislike to hear his son well spoken of by those who are well spoken of themselves. Won't you try, Mr. Finn?" Phineas said that he would think of it,—that he would try if any fit opportunity could be found. "Of course you know how intimate I have been with the Standishes," said Violet; "that Laura is to me a sister, and that Oswald used to be almost a brother."

"Why do not you speak to Lord Brentford;—you who are his favourite?"

"There are reasons, Mr. Finn. Besides, how can any girl come forward and say that she knows the disposition of any man? You can live with Lord Chiltern, and see what he is made of and know his thoughts, and learn what is good in him, and also what is bad. After all, how is any girl really to know anything of a man's life?"

"If I can do anything, Miss Effingham, I will," said Phineas.

"And then we shall all of us be so grateful to you," said Violet, with her sweetest smile.

Phineas, retreating from this conversation, stood for a while alone, thinking of it. Had she spoken thus of Lord Chiltern because she did love him or because she did not? And the sweet commendations which had fallen from her lips upon him,—him, Phineas Finn,—were they compatible with anything like a growing

partiality for himself, or were they incompatible with any such feeling? Had he most reason to be comforted or to be discomfited by what had taken place? It seemed hardly possible to his imagination that Violet Effingham should love such a nobody as he. And yet he had had fair evidence that one standing as high in the world as Violet Effingham would fain have loved him could she have followed the dictates of her heart. He had trembled when he had first resolved to declare his passion to Lady Laura,—fearing that she would scorn him as being presumptuous. But there had been no cause for such fear as that. He had declared his love, and she had not thought him to be presumptuous. That now was ages ago,—eight months since; and Lady Laura had become a married woman. Since he had become so warmly alive to the charms of Violet Effingham he had determined, with stern propriety, that a passion for a married woman was disgraceful. Such love was in itself a sin, even though it was accompanied by the severest forbearance and the most rigid propriety of conduct. No;—Lady Laura had done wisely to check the growing feeling of partiality which she had admitted; and now that she was married, he would be as wise as she. It was clear to him that, as regarded his own heart, the way was open to him for a new enterprise. But what if he were to fail again, and be told by Violet, when he declared his love, that she had just engaged herself to Lord Chiltern.

"What were you and Violet talking about so eagerly?" said Lady Laura to him, with a smile that, in its approach to laughter, almost betrayed its mistress.

"We were talking about your brother."

"You are going to him, are you not?"

"Yes; I leave London on Sunday night;—but only for a day or two."

"Has he any chance there, do you think?"

"What, with Miss Effingham?"

"Yes;—with Violet. Sometimes I think she loves him."

"How can I say? In such a matter you can judge better than I can do. One woman with reference to another can draw the line between love and friendship. She certainly likes Lord Chiltern."

"Oh, I believe she loves him. I do indeed. But she fears him. She does not quite understand how much there is of tenderness with that assumed ferocity. And Oswald is so strange, so unwise, so impolitic, that though he loves her better than all the world beside, he will not sacrifice even a turn of a word to win her. When he asks her to marry him, he almost flies at her throat, as an angry debtor who applies for instant payment. Tell him, Mr. Finn, never to give it over;—and teach him that he should be soft with her. Tell him, also, that in her heart she likes him. One woman, as you say, knows another woman; and I am certain he would win her if he would only be gentle with her." Then, again, before they parted, Lady Laura told him that this marriage was the dearest wish of her heart, and that there would be no end to her gratitude if Phineas could do anything to promote it. All which again made our hero unhappy.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SUNDAY IN GROSVENOR PLACE.

MR. KENNEDY, though he was a most scrupulously attentive member of Parliament, was a man very punctual to hours and rules in his own house,—and liked that his wife should be as punctual as himself. Lady Laura, who in marrying him had firmly resolved that she would do her duty to him in all ways, even though the ways might sometimes be painful,—and had been perhaps more punctilious in this respect than she might have been had she loved him heartily,—was not perhaps quite so fond of accurate regularity as her husband; and thus, by this time, certain habits of his had become rather bonds than habits to her. He always had prayers at nine, and breakfasted at a quarter past nine, let the hours on the night before have been as late as they might before the time for rest had come. After breakfast he would open his letters in his study, but he liked her to be with him, and desired to discuss with her every application he got from a constituent. He had his private secretary in a room apart, but he thought that everything should be filtered to his private secretary through his wife. He was very anxious that she herself should superintend the accounts of their own private expenditure, and had taken some trouble to teach her an excellent mode of book-keeping. He had recommended to her a certain course of reading,—which was pleasant enough; ladies like to receive such rec-

ommendations; but Mr. Kennedy, having drawn out the course, seemed to expect that his wife should read the books he had named, and, worse still, that she should read them in the time he had allocated for the work. This, I think, was tyranny. Then the Sundays became very wearisome to Lady Laura. Going to church twice, she had learnt, would be a part of her duty; and though in her father's household attendance at church had never been very strict, she had made up her mind to this cheerfully. But Mr. Kennedy expected also that he and she should always dine together on Sundays, that there should be no guests, and that there should be no evening company. After all, the demand was not very severe, but yet she found that it operated injuriously upon her comfort. The Sundays were very wearisome to her, and made her feel that her lord and master was—her lord and master. She made an effort or two to escape, but the efforts were all in vain. He never spoke a cross word to her. He never gave a stern command. But yet he had his way. "I won't say that reading a novel on a Sunday is a sin," he said; "but we must at any rate admit that it is a matter on which men disagree, that many of the best of men are against such occupation on Sunday, and that to abstain is to be on the safe side." So the novels were put away, and Sunday afternoon with the long evening became rather a stumbling-block to Lady Laura.

Those two hours, moreover, with her husband in the morning became very wearisome to her. At first she had declared that it would be her greatest ambition to help her husband in his work, and she had read all the letters from the MacNabs and MacFies, asking to be made gaugers and landing-waiters, with an assumed

interest. But the work palled upon her very quickly. Her quick intellect discovered soon that there was nothing in it which she really did. It was all form and verbiage, and pretence at business. Her husband went through it all with the utmost patience, reading every word, giving orders as to every detail, and conscientiously doing that which he conceived he had undertaken to do. But Lady Laura wanted to meddle with high politics, to discuss reform bills, to assist in putting up Mr. This and in putting down my Lord That. Why should she waste her time in doing that which the lad in the next room, who was called a private secretary, could do as well?

Still she would obey. Let the task be as hard as it might, she would obey. If he counselled her to do this or that, she would follow his counsel,—because she owed him so much. If she had accepted the half of all his wealth without loving him, she owed him the more on that account. But she knew,—she could not but know,—that her intellect was brighter than his; and might it not be possible for her to lead him? Then she made efforts to lead her husband, and found that he was as stiff-necked as an ox. Mr. Kennedy was not, perhaps, a clever man; but he was a man who knew his own way, and who intended to keep it.

"I have got a headache, Robert," she said to him one Sunday after luncheon. "I think I will not go to church this afternoon."

"It is not serious, I hope."

"Oh dear, no. Don't you know how one feels sometimes that one has got a head? And when that is the case one's arm-chair is the best place."

"I am not sure of that," said Mr. Kennedy.

"If I went to church I should not attend," said Lady Laura.

"The fresh air would do you more good than anything else, and we could walk across the park."

"Thank you;—I won't go out again to-day." This she said with something almost of crossness in her manner, and Mr. Kennedy went to the afternoon service by himself.

Lady Laura when she was left alone began to think of her position. She was not more than four or five months married, and she was becoming very tired of her life. Was it not also true that she was becoming tired of her husband? She had twice told Phineas Finn that of all men in the world she esteemed Mr. Kennedy the most. She did not esteem him less now. She knew no point or particle in which he did not do his duty with accuracy. But no person can live happily with another,—not even with a brother or a sister or a friend,—simply upon esteem. All the virtues in the calendar, though they exist on each side, will not make a man and woman happy together, unless there be sympathy. Lady Laura was beginning to find out that there was a lack of sympathy between herself and her husband.

She thought of this till she was tired of thinking of it, and then, wishing to divert her mind, she took up the book that was lying nearest to her hand. It was a volume of a new novel which she had been reading on the previous day, and now, without much thought about it, she went on with her reading. There came to her, no doubt, some dim, half-formed idea that, as she was freed from going to church by the plea of a headache, she was also absolved by the same plea from

other Sunday hindrances. A child, when it is ill, has buttered toast and a picture-book instead of bread-and-milk and lessons. In this way, Lady Laura conceived herself to be entitled to her novel.

While she was reading it, there came a knock at the door, and Barrington Erle was shown upstairs. Mr. Kennedy had given no orders against Sunday visitors, but had simply said that Sunday visiting was not to his taste. Barrington, however, was Lady Laura's cousin, and people must be very strict if they can't see their cousins on Sunday. Lady Laura soon lost her headache altogether in the animation of discussing the chances of the new Reform Bill with the Prime Minister's private secretary; and had left her chair, and was standing by the table with the novel in her hand, protesting this and denying that, expressing infinite confidence in Mr. Monk, and violently denouncing Mr. Turnbull, when her husband returned from church and came up into the drawing-room. Lady Laura had forgotten her headache altogether, and had in her composition none of that thoughtfulness of hypocrisy which would have taught her to moderate her political feeling at her husband's return.

"I do declare," she said, "that if Mr. Turnbull opposes the Government measure now, because he can't have his own way in everything, I will never again put my trust in any man who calls himself a popular leader."

"You never should," said Barrington Erle.

"That 's all very well for you, Barrington, who are an aristocratic whig of the old official school, and who call yourself a liberal simply because Fox was a liberal a hundred years ago. My heart 's in it."

"Heart should never have anything to do with poli-

tics; should it?" said Erle, turning round to Mr. Kennedy.

Mr. Kennedy did not wish to discuss the matter on a Sunday, nor yet did he wish to say before Barrington Erle that he thought it wrong to do so. And he was desirous of treating his wife in some way as though she were an invalid,—that she thereby might be, as it were, punished; but he did not wish to do this in such a way that Barrington should be aware of the punishment.

"Laura had better not disturb herself about it now," he said.

"How is a person to help being disturbed?" said Lady Laura, laughing.

"Well, well; we won't mind all that now," said Mr. Kennedy, turning away. Then he took up the novel which Lady Laura had just laid down from her hand, and, having looked at it, carried it aside, and placed it on a book-shelf which was remote from them. Lady Laura watched him as he did this, and the whole course of her husband's thoughts on the subject was open to her at once. She regretted the novel, and she regretted also the political discussion. Soon afterwards Barrington Erle went away, and the husband and wife were alone together.

"I am glad that your head is so much better," said he. He did not intend to be severe, but he spoke with a gravity of manner which almost amounted to severity.

"Yes; it is," she said. "Barrington's coming in cheered me up."

"I am sorry that you should have wanted cheering."

"Don't you know what I mean, Robert?"

"No; I do not think that I do, exactly."

"I suppose your head is stronger. You do not get

that feeling of dazed, helpless imbecility of brain, which hardly amounts to headache, but which yet—is almost as bad."

"Imbecility of brain may be worse than headache, but I don't think it can produce it."

"Well, well;—I don't know how to explain it."

"Headache comes, I think, always from the stomach, even when produced originally by nervous affections. But imbecility of the brain——"

"Oh, Robert, I am so sorry that I used the word."

"I see that it did not prevent your reading," he said, after a pause.

"Not such reading as that. I was up to nothing better."

Then there was another pause.

"I won't deny that it may be a prejudice," he said, "but I confess that the use of novels in my own house on Sundays is a pain to me. My mother's ideas on the subject are very strict, and I cannot think that it is bad for a son to hang on to the teaching of his mother." This he said in the most serious tone which he could command.

"I don't know why I took it up," said Lady Laura. "Simply, I believe, because it was there. I will avoid doing so for the future."

"Do, my dear," said the husband. "I shall be obliged and grateful if you will remember what I have said." Then he left her, and she sat alone, first in the dusk and then in the dark, for two hours, doing nothing. Was this to be the life which she had procured for herself by marrying Mr. Kennedy of Loughlinter? If it was harsh and unendurable in London, what would it be in the country?

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WILLINGFORD BULL.

PHINEAS left London by a night-mail train on Easter Sunday, and found himself at the Willingford Bull about half an hour after midnight. Lord Chiltern was up and waiting for him, and supper was on the table. The Willingford Bull was an English inn of the old stamp, which had now, in these latter years of railway travelling, ceased to have a road business,—for there were no travellers on the road, and but little posting,—but had acquired a new trade as a dépôt for hunters and hunting men. The landlord let out horses and kept hunting stables, and the house was generally filled from the beginning of November till the middle of April. Then it became a desert in the summer, and no guests were seen there, till the pink coats flocked down again into the shires.

"How many days do you mean to give us?" said Lord Chiltern, as he helped his friend to a devilled leg of a turkey.

"I must go back on Wednesday," said Phineas.

"That means Wednesday night. I 'll tell you what we 'll do. We 've the Cottesmore to-morrow. We 'll get into Tailby's country on Tuesday, and Fitzwilliam will be only twelve miles off on Wednesday. We shall be rather short of horses."

"Pray don't let me put you out. I can hire something here, I suppose?"

"You won't put me out at all. There 'll be three

between us each day, and we 'll run our luck. The horses have gone on to Empingham for to-morrow. Tailby is rather a way off,—at Somerby; but we 'll manage it. If the worst comes to the worst, we can get back to Stamford by rail. On Wednesday we shall have everything very comfortable. They 're out beyond Stilton and will draw home our way. I 've planned it all out. I 've a trap with a fast stepper, and if we start to-morrow at half-past nine, we shall be in plenty of time. You shall ride Meg Merrilies, and if she don't carry you, you may shoot her."

"Is she one of the pulling ones?"

"She is heavy in hand if you are heavy at her, but leave her mouth alone and she 'll go like flowing water. You 'd better not ride more in a crowd than you can help. Now, what 'll you drink?"

They sat up half the night smoking and talking, and Phineas learned more about Lord Chiltern then than ever he had learned before. There was brandy and water before them, but neither of them drank. Lord Chiltern, indeed, had a pint of beer by his side from which he sipped occasionally. "I 've taken to beer," he said, "as being the best drink going. When a man hunts six days a week he can afford to drink beer. I 'm on an allowance,—three pints a day. That 's not too much."

"And you drink nothing else?"

"Nothing when I 'm alo e,—except a little cherry-brandy when I 'm out. I never cared for drink;—never in my life. I do like xcitement, and have been less careful than I ou ave been as to what it has come from. I c p drink to-morrow, with-out a struggle,– rth my while to make up

my mind to do it. And it 's the same with gambling. I never do gamble now, because I 've got no money; but I own I like it better than anything in the world. While you are at it, there is life in it."

"You should take to politics, Chiltern."

"And I would have done so, but my father would not help me. Never mind, we will not talk about him. How does Laura get on with her husband?"

"Very happily, I should say."

"I don't believe it," said Lord Chiltern. "Her temper is too much like mine to allow her to be happy with such a log of wood as Robert Kennedy. It is such men as he who drive me out of the pale of decent life. If that is decency, I 'd sooner be indecent. You mark my words. They 'll come to grief. She 'll never be able to stand it."

"I should think she had her own way in everything," said Phineas.

"No, no. Though he 's a prig, he 's a man; and she will not find it easy to drive him."

"But she may bend him."

"Not an inch;—that is if I understand his character. I suppose you see a good deal of them?"

"Yes,—pretty well. I 'm not there so often as I used to be in the Square."

"You get sick of it, I suppose. I should. Do you see my father often?"

"Only occasionally. He is always very civil when I do see him."

"He is the very pink of civility when he pleases, but the most unjust man I ever met."

"I should not have thought that."

"Yes, he is," said the Earl's son, "and all from lack

of judgment to discern the truth. He makes up his mind to a thing on insufficient proof, and then nothing will turn him. He thinks well of you,—would probably believe your word on any indifferent subject without thought of a doubt; but if you were to tell him that I did n't get drunk every night of my life and spend most of my time in thrashing policemen, he would not believe you. He would smile incredulously and make you a little bow. I can see him do it."

"You are too hard on him, Chiltern."

"He has been too hard on me, I know. Is Violet Effingham still in Grosvenor Place?"

"No; she 's with Lady Baldock."

"That old grandmother of evil has come to town,—has she? Poor Violet! When we were young together we used to have such fun about that old woman."

"The old woman is an ally of mine now," said Phineas.

"You make allies everywhere. You know Violet Effingham, of course?"

"Oh yes. I know her."

"Don't you think her very charming?" said Lord Chiltern.

"Exceedingly charming."

"I have asked that girl to marry me three times, and I shall never ask her again. There is a point beyond which a man should n't go. There are many reasons why it would be a good marriage. In the first place, her money would be serviceable. Then it would heal matters in our family, for my father is as prejudiced in her favour as he is against me. And I love her dearly. I 've loved her all my life,—since I used to buy cakes for her. But I shall never ask her again."

"I would if I were you," said Phineas,—hardly knowing what it might be best for him to say.

"No; I never will. But I 'll tell you what. I shall get into some desperate scrape about her. Of course she 'll marry, and that soon. Then I shall make a fool of myself. When I hear that she is engaged I shall go and quarrel with the man, and kick him,—or get kicked. All the world will turn against me, and I shall be called a wild beast."

"A dog in the manger is what you should be called."

"Exactly;—but how is a man to help it? If you loved a girl, could you see another man take her?" Phineas remembered of course that he had lately come through this ordeal. "It is as though he were to come and put his hand upon me, and wanted my own heart out of me. Though I have no property in her at all, no right to her,—though she never gave me a word of encouragement, it is as though she were the most private thing in the world to me. I should be half mad, and in my madness I could not master the idea that I was being robbed. I should resent it as a personal interference."

"I suppose it will come to that if you give her up yourself," said Phineas.

"It is no question of giving up. Of course I cannot make her marry me. Light another cigar, old fellow."

Phineas, as he lit the other cigar, remembered that he owed a certain duty in this matter to Lady Laura. She had commissioned him to persuade her brother that his suit with Violet Effingham would not be hopeless, if he could only restrain himself in his mode of conducting it. Phineas was disposed to do his duty, although he felt it to be very hard that he should be

called upon to be eloquent against his own interest. He had been thinking for the last quarter of an hour how he must bear himself if it might turn out that he should be the man whom Lord Chiltern was resolved to kick. He looked at his friend and host, and became aware that a kicking-match with such a one would not be pleasant pastime. Nevertheless, he would be happy enough to be subject to Lord Chiltern's wrath for such a reason. He would do his duty by Lord Chiltern; and then, when that had been adequately done, he would, if occasion served, fight a battle for himself.

"You are too sudden with her, Chiltern," he said, after a pause.

"What do you mean by too sudden?" said Lord Chiltern, almost angrily.

"You frighten her by being so impetuous. You rush at her as though you wanted to conquer her by a single blow."

"So I do."

"You should be more gentle with her. You should give her time to find out whether she likes you or not."

"She has known me all her life, and has found that out long ago. Not but what you are right. I know you are right. If I were you, and had your skill in pleasing, I should drop soft words into her ear till I had caught her. But I have no gifts in that way. I am as awkward as a pig at what is called flirting. And I have an accursed pride which stands in my own light. If she were in this house this moment, and if I knew she were to be had for asking, I don't think I could bring myself to ask again. But we 'll go to bed. It 's half-past two, and we must be off at half-past nine, if we 're to be at Exton Park gates at eleven."

Phineas, as he went upstairs, assured himself that he had done his duty. If there ever should come to be anything between him and Violet Effingham, Lord Chiltern might quarrel with him,—might probably attempt that kicking encounter to which allusion had been made,—but nobody could justly say that he had not behaved honourably to his friend.

On the next morning there was a bustle and a scurry, as there always is on such occasions, and the two men got off about ten minutes after time. But Lord Chiltern drove hard, and they reached the meet before the master had moved off. They had a fair day's sport with the Cottesmore; and Phineas, though he found that Meg Merrilies did require a good deal of riding, went through his day's work with credit. He had been riding since he was a child, as is the custom with all boys in Munster, and had an Irishman's natural aptitude for jumping. When they got back to the Willingford Bull he felt pleased with the day and rather proud of himself. "It was n't fast, you know," said Chiltern, "and I don't call that a stiff country. Besides, Meg is very handy when you 've got her out of the crowd. You shall ride Bonebreaker to-morrow at Somerby, and you 'll find that better fun."

"Bonebreaker? Have n't I heard you say he rushes like mischief?"

"Well, he does rush. But, by George! you want a horse to rush in that country. When you have to go right through four or five feet of stiff green wood, like a bullet through a target, you want a little force, or you 're apt to be left up a tree."

"And what do you ride?"

"A brute I never put my leg on yet. He was sent

down to Wilcox here, out of Lincolnshire, because they could n't get anybody to ride him there. They say he goes with his head up in the air, and won't look at a fence that is n't as high as his breast. But I think he 'll do here. I never saw a better made beast, or one with more power. Do you look at his shoulders. He 's to be had for seventy pounds, and these are the sort of horses I like to buy."

Again they dined alone, and Lord Chiltern explained to Phineas that he rarely associated with the men of either of the hunts in which he rode. "There is a set of fellows down here who are poison to me, and there is another set, and I am poison to them. Everybody is very civil, as you see, but I have no associates. And gradually I am getting to have a reputation as though I were the devil himself. I think I shall come out next year dressed entirely in black."

"Are you not wrong to give way to that kind of thing?"

"What the deuce am I to do? I can't make civil little speeches. When once a man gets a reputation as an ogre, it is the most difficult thing in the world to drop it. I could have a score of men here every day if I liked it,—my title would do that for me;—but they would be men I should loathe, and I should be sure to tell them so, even though I did not mean it. Bonebreaker, and the new horse, and another, went on at twelve to-day. You must expect hard work to-morrow, as I dare say we shan't be home before eight."

The next day's meet was in Leicestershire, not far from Melton, and they started early. Phineas, to tell the truth of him, was rather afraid of Bonebreaker, and looked forward to the probability of an accident. He

had neither wife nor child, and nobody had a better right to risk his neck. "We 'll put a gag on 'im," said the groom, "and you 'll ride 'im in a ring,—so that you may well-nigh break his jaw; but he is a rum un, sir." "I 'll do my best," said Phineas. "He 'll take all that," said the groom. "Just let him have his own way at everything," said Lord Chiltern, as they moved away from the meet to Pickwell Gorse; "and if you 'll only sit on his back, he 'll carry you through as safe as a church." Phineas could not help thinking that the counsels of the master and of the groom were very different. "My idea is," continued Lord Chiltern, "that in hunting you should always avoid a crowd. I don't think a horse is worth riding that will go in a crowd. It 's just like yachting,—you should have plenty of sea-room. If you 're to pull your horse up at every fence till somebody else is over, I think you 'd better come out on a donkey." And so they went away to Pickwell Gorse.

There were over two hundred men out, and Phineas began to think that it might not be so easy to get out of the crowd. A crowd in a fast run no doubt quickly becomes small by degrees and beautifully less; but it is very difficult, especially for a stranger, to free himself from the rush at the first start. Lord Chiltern's horse plunged about so violently, as they stood on a little hill-side looking down upon the cover, that he was obliged to take him to a distance, and Phineas followed him. "If he breaks down wind," said Lord Chiltern, "we can't be better than we are here. If he goes up wind, he must turn before long, and we shall be all right." As he spoke an old hound opened true and sharp,—an old hound whom all the pack believed,—and in a

moment there was no doubt that the fox had been found. "There are not above eight or nine acres in it," said Lord Chiltern, "and he can't hang long. Did you ever see such an uneasy brute as this in your life? But I feel certain he 'll go well when he gets away."

Phineas was too much occupied with his own horse to think much of that on which Lord Chiltern was mounted. Bonebreaker, the very moment that he heard the old hound's note, stretched out his head, and put his mouth upon the bit, and began to tremble in every muscle. "He 's a great deal more anxious for it than you and I are," said Lord Chiltern. "I see they 've given you that gag. But don't you ride him on it till he wants it. Give him lots of room, and he 'll go in the snaffle." All which caution made Phineas think that any insurance office would charge very dear on his life at the present moment.

The fox took two rings of the gorse, and then he went,—up wind. "It 's not a vixen, I 'll swear," said Lord Chiltern. "A vixen in cub never went away like that yet. Now then, Finn, my boy, keep to the right." And Lord Chiltern, with the horse out of Lincolnshire, went away across the brow of the hill, leaving the hounds to the left, and selected, as his point of exit into the next field, a stiff rail, which, had there been an accident, must have put a very wide margin of ground between the rider and his horse. "Go hard at your fences, and then you 'll fall clear," he had said to Phineas. I don't think, however, that he would have ridden at the rail as he did, but that there was no help for him. "The brute began in his own way, and carried on after in the same fashion all through," he said afterwards. Phineas took the fence a little lower

down, and what it was at which he rode he never knew. Bonebreaker sailed over it, whatever it was, and he soon found himself by his friend's side.

The ruck of the men were lower down than our two heroes, and there were others far away to the left, and others, again, who had been at the end of the gorse, and were now behind. Our friends were not near the hounds, not within two fields of them, but the hounds were below them, and therefore could be seen. "Don't be in a hurry, and they 'll be round upon us," Lord Chiltern said. "How the deuce is one to help being in a hurry?" said Phineas, who was doing his very best to ride Bonebreaker with the snaffle, but had already begun to feel that Bonebreaker cared nothing for that weak instrument. "By George, I should like to charge with you," said Lord Chiltern. The Lincolnshire horse was going along with his head very low, boring as he galloped, but throwing his neck up at his fences, just when he ought to have kept himself steady. After this, though Phineas kept near Lord Chiltern throughout the run, they were not again near enough to exchange words; and, indeed, they had but little breath for such purpose.

Lord Chiltern rode still a little in advance, and Phineas, knowing his friend's partiality for solitude when taking his fences, kept a little to his left. He began to find that Bonebreaker knew pretty well what he was about. As for not using the gag rein, that was impossible. When a horse puts out what strength he has against a man's arm, a man must put out what strength he has against the horse's mouth. But Bonebreaker was cunning, and had had a gag rein on before. He contracted his lip here, and bent out his jaw

there, till he had settled it to his mind, and then went away after his own fashion. He seemed to have a passion for smashing through big, high-grown ox-fences, and by degrees his rider came to feel that if there was nothing worse coming, the fun was not bad.

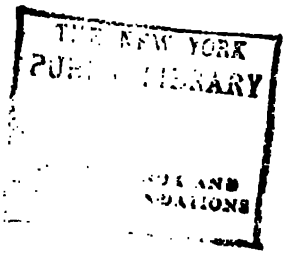
The fox ran up wind for a couple of miles or so, as Lord Chiltern had prophesied, and then turned,—not to the right, as would best have served him and Phineas, but to the left,—so that they were forced to make their way through the ruck of horses before they could place themselves again. Phineas found himself crossing a road, in and out of it, before he knew where he was, and for a while he lost sight of Lord Chiltern. But in truth he was leading now, whereas Lord Chiltern had led before. The two horses having been together all the morning, and on the previous day, were willing enough to remain in company, if they were allowed to do so. They both crossed the road, not very far from each other, going in and out amidst a crowd of horses, and before long were again placed well, now having the hunt on their right, whereas hitherto it had been on their left. They went over large pasture fields, and Phineas began to think that as long as Bonebreaker would be able to go through the thick grown-up hedges, all would be right. Now and again he came to a cut fence, a fence that had been cut and laid, and these were not so pleasant. Force was not sufficient for them, and they admitted of a mistake. But the horse, though he would rush at them unpleasantly, took them when they came without touching them. It might be all right yet,—unless the beast should tire with him; and then, Phineas thought, a misfortune might probably occur. He remembered, as he flew over one such im-

pediment, that he rode a stone heavier than his friend. At the end of forty-five minutes Bonebreaker also might become aware of the fact.

The hounds were running well in sight to their right, and Phineas began to feel some of that pride which a man indulges when he becomes aware that he has taken his place comfortably, has left the squad behind, and is going well. There were men nearer the hounds than he was, but he was near enough even for ambition. There had already been enough of the run to make him sure that it would be a "good thing," and enough to make him aware also that probably it might be too good. When a run is over, men are very apt to regret the termination, who a minute or two before were anxiously longing that the hounds might pull down their game. To finish well is everything in hunting. To have led for over an hour is nothing, let the pace and country have been what they might, if you fall away during the last half mile. Therefore it is that those behind hope that the fox may make this or that cover, while the forward men long to see him turned over in every field. To ride to hounds is very glorious; but to have ridden to hounds is more glorious still. They had now crossed another road, and a larger one, and had got into a somewhat closer country. The fields were not so big, and the fences were not so high. Phineas got a moment to look about him, and saw Lord Chiltern riding without his cap. He was very red in the face, and his eyes seemed to glare, and he was tugging at his horse with all his might. But the animal seemed still to go with perfect command of strength, and Phineas had too much work on his own hands to think of offering Quixotic assistance to any

one else. He saw some one, a farmer, as he thought, speak to Lord Chiltern as they rode close together; but Chiltern only shook his head and pulled at his horse.

There were brooks in those parts. The River Eye forms itself thereabouts, or some of its tributaries do so; and these tributaries, though small as rivers, are considerable to men on one side who are called by the exigencies of the occasion to place themselves quickly on the other. Phineas knew nothing of these brooks; but Bonebreaker had gone gallantly over two, and now that there came a third in the way, it was to be hoped that he might go gallantly over that also. Phineas, at any rate, had no power to decide otherwise. As long as the brute would go straight with him he could sit him; but he had long given up the idea of having a will of his own. Indeed, till he was within twenty yards of the brook, be did not see that it was larger than the others. He looked round, and there was Chiltern close to him, still fighting with his horse;—but the farmer had turned away. He thought that Chiltern nodded to him, as much as to tell him to go on. On he went at any rate. The brook, when he came to it, seemed to be a huge black hole, yawning beneath him. The banks were quite steep, and just where he was to take off there was an ugly stump. It was too late to think of anything. He stuck his knees against his saddle,—and in a moment was on the other side. The brute, who had taken off a yard before the stump, knowing well the danger of striking it with his foot, came down with a grunt, and did, I think, begin to feel the weight of that extra stone. Phineas, as soon as he was safe, looked back, and there was Lord Chiltern's horse in the very act of his spring,—higher up the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"Are you hurt?"

[illegible]

[illegible]

Phineas [illegible]

[illegible]

water. "All right, [illegible]

when he saw Phineas.

[illegible]se." [illegible] ***"Are you hurt?"***

helpless where he [illegible]

never did move again. [illegible]

to pieces against a [illegible]

wards [illegible]

When Phineas [illegible]

[illegible]

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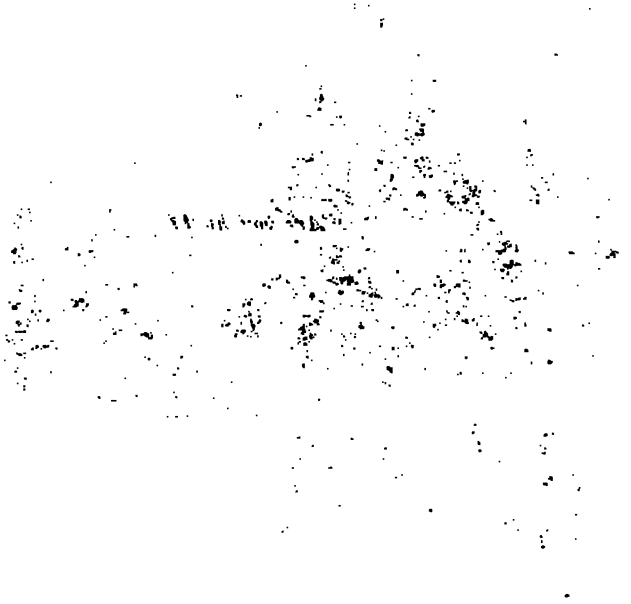

rivulet, where it was even broader. At that distance Phineas could see that Lord Chiltern was wild with rage against the beast. But whether he wished to take the leap or wished to avoid it, there was no choice left to him. The animal rushed at the brook, in a moment the horse and horseman were lost to sight. It was well then that that extra stone should tell, as it enabled Phineas to arrest his horse and to come back to his friend.

The Lincolnshire horse had chested the further bank, and of course had fallen back into the stream. When Phineas got down he found that Lord Chiltern was wedged in between the horse and the bank, which was better, at any rate, than being under the horse in the water. "All right, old fellow," he said, with a smile, when he saw Phineas. "You go on; it 's too good to lose." But he was very pale; and seemed to be quite helpless where he lay. The horse did not move,—and never did move again. He had smashed his shoulder to pieces against a stump on the bank, and was afterwards shot on that very spot.

When Phineas got down he found that there was but little water where the horse lay. The depth of the stream had been on the side from which they had taken off, and the thick black mud lay within a foot of the surface, close to the bank against which Lord Chiltern was propped. "That 's the worst one I ever was on," said Lord Chiltern; "but I think he 's gruelled now."

"Are you hurt?"

"Well;—I fancy there is something amiss. I can't move my arms; and I catch my breath. My legs are all right if I could get away from this accursed brute."

"I told you so," said the farmer, coming and looking down upon them from the bank. "I told you so,

but you would n't be said." Then he too got down, and between them both they extricated Lord Chiltern from his position, and got him on to the bank.

"That un 's a dead un," said the farmer, pointing to the horse.

"So much the better," said his lordship. "Give us a drop of sherry, Finn."

He had broken his collar-bone and three of his ribs. They got a farmer's trap from Wissindine and took him into Oakham. When there, he insisted on being taken on through Stamford to the Willingford Bull before he would have his bones set,—picking up, however, a surgeon at Stamford. Phineas remained with him for a couple of days, losing his run with the Fitzwilliams and a day at the potted peas, and became very fond of his patient as he sat by his bedside.

"That was a good run, though, was n't it?" said Lord Chiltern as Phineas took his leave. "And, by George, Phineas, you rode Bonebreaker so well, that you shall have him as often as you 'll come down. I don't know how it is, but you Irish fellows always ride."

CHAPTER XXV.

MR. TURNBULL'S CARRIAGE STOPS THE WAY.

WHEN Phineas got back to London, a day after his time, he found that there was already a great political commotion in the metropolis. He had known that on Easter Monday and Tuesday there was to be a gathering of the people in favour of the ballot, and that on Wednesday there was to be a procession with a petition which Mr. Turnbull was to receive from the hands of the people on Primrose Hill. It had been at first intended that Mr. Turnbull should receive the petition at the door of Westminster Hall on the Thursday; but he had been requested by the Home Secretary to put aside this intention, and he had complied with the request made to him. Mr. Mildmay was to move the second reading of his Reform Bill on that day, the preliminary steps having been taken without any special notice; but the bill of course included no clause in favour of the ballot; and this petition was the consequence of that omission. Mr. Turnbull had predicted evil consequences, both in the House and out of it, and was now doing the best in his power to bring about the verification of his own prophecies. Phineas, who reached his lodgings late on the Thursday, found that the town had been in a state of ferment for three days, that on the Wednesday forty or fifty thousand persons had been collected at Primrose Hill, and that the police

had been forced to interfere,—and that worse was expected on the Friday. Though Mr. Turnbull had yielded to the Government as to receiving the petition, the crowd was resolved that they would see the petition carried into the House. It was argued that the Government would have done better to have refrained from interfering as to the previously intended arrangement. It would have been easier to deal with a procession than with a mob of men gathered together without any semblage of form. Mr. Mildmay had been asked to postpone the second reading of his bill; but the request had come from his opponents, and he would not yield to it. He said that it would be a bad expedient to close Parliament from fear of the people. Phineas found at the Reform Club on the Thursday evening that members of the House of Commons were requested to enter on the Friday by the door usually used by the peers, and to make their way thence to their own House. He found that his landlord, Mr. Bunce, had been out with the people during the entire three days;—and Mrs. Bunce, with a flood of tears, begged Phineas to interfere as to the Friday. "He 's that headstrong that he 'll be took if anybody 's took; and they say that all Westminster is to be lined with soldiers." Phineas on the Friday morning did have some conversation with his landlord; but his first work on reaching London was to see Lord Chiltern's friends, and tell them of the accident.

The potted peas Committee sat on the Thursday, and he ought to have been there. His absence, however, was unavoidable, as he could not have left his friend's bedside so soon after the accident. On the Wednesday he had written to Lady Laura, and on the

Thursday evening he went first to Portman Square and then to Grosvenor Place.

"Of course he will kill himself some day," said the Earl,—with a tear, however, in each eye.

"I hope not, my lord. He is a magnificent horseman; but accidents of course will happen."

"How many of his bones are there not broken, I wonder?" said the father. "It is useless to talk, of course. You think he is not in danger?"

"Certainly not."

"I should fear that he would be so liable to inflammation."

"The doctor says that there is none. He has been taking an enormous deal of exercise," said Phineas, "and drinking no wine. All that is in his favour."

"What does he drink, then?" asked the Earl.

"Nothing. I rather think, my lord, you are mistaken a little about his habits. I don't fancy he ever drinks unless he is provoked to do it."

"Provoked! Could anything provoke you to make a brute of yourself? But I am glad that he is in no danger. If you hear of him, let me know how he goes on."

Lady Laura was of course full of concern. "I wanted to go down to him," she said, "but Mr. Kennedy thought that there was no occasion."

"Nor is there any;—I mean in regard to danger. He is very solitary there."

"You must go to him again. Mr. Kennedy will not let me go unless I can say that there is danger. He seems to think that because Oswald has had accidents before, it is nothing. Of course I cannot leave London without his leave."

"Your brother makes very little of it, you know."

"Ah;—he would make little of anything. But if I were ill he would be in London by the first train."

"Kennedy would let you go if you asked him."

"But he advises me not to go. He says my duty does not require it unless Oswald be in danger. Don't you know, Mr. Finn, how hard it is for a wife not to take advice when it is so given?" This she said, within six months of her marriage, to the man who had been her husband's rival!

Phineas asked her whether Violet had heard the news, and learned that she was still ignorant of it. "I got your letter only this morning, and I have not seen her," said Lady Laura. "Indeed, I am so angry with her that I hardly wish to see her." Thursday was Lady Baldock's night, and Phineas went from Grosvenor Place to Berkeley Square. There he saw Violet, and found that she had heard of the accident.

"I am so glad to see you, Mr. Finn," she said. "Do tell me;—is it much?"

"Much in inconvenience, certainly; but not much in danger."

"I think Laura was so unkind not to send me word! I only heard it just now. Did you see it?"

"I was close to him, and helped him up. The horse jumped into a river with him, and crushed him up against the bank."

"How lucky that you should be there! Had you jumped the river?"

"Yes;—almost unintentionally, for my horse was rushing so that I could not hold him. Chiltern was riding a brute that no one should have ridden. No one will again."

"Did he destroy himself?"

"He had to be killed afterwards. He broke his shoulder."

"How very lucky that you should have been near him,—and, again, how lucky that you should not have been hurt yourself!"

"It was not likely that we should both come to grief at the same fence."

"But it might have been you. And you think there is no danger?"

"None whatever,—if I may believe the doctor. His hunting is done for this year, and he will be very desolate. I shall go down again to him in a few days, and try to bring him up to town."

"Do;—do. If he is laid up in his father's house, his father must see him." Phineas had not looked at the matter in that light; but he thought that Miss Effingham might probably be right.

Early on the next morning he saw Mr. Bunce, and used all his eloquence to keep that respectable member of society at home;—but in vain. "What good do you expect to do, Mr. Bunce?" he said, with perhaps some little tone of authority in his voice.

"To carry my point," said Bunce.

"And what is your point?"

"My present point is the ballot, as a part of the Government measure."

"And you expect to carry that by going out into the streets with all the roughs of London, and putting yourself in direct opposition to the authority of the magistrates? Do you really believe that the ballot will become the law of the land any sooner because you incur this danger and inconvenience?"

"Look here, Mr. Finn; I don't believe the sea will become any fuller because the Piddle runs into it out of the Dorsetshire fields; but I do believe that the waters from all the countries is what makes the ocean. I shall help; and it 's my duty to help."

"It 's your duty, as a respectable citizen, with a wife and family, to stay at home."

"If everybody with a wife and family was to say so, there 'd be none there but roughs, and then where should we be? What would the Government people say to us then? If every man with a wife and family was to show hisself in the streets to-night, we should have the ballot before Parliament breaks up, and if none of 'em don't do it, we shall never have the ballot. Ain't that so?" Phineas, who intended to be honest, was not prepared to dispute the assertion on the spur of the moment. "If that 's so," said Bunce, triumphantly, "a man's duty 's clear enough. He ought to go, though he 'd two wives and families." And he went.

The petition was to be presented at six o'clock, but the crowd, who collected to see it carried into Westminster Hall, began to form itself by noon. It was said afterwards that many of the houses in the neighbourhood of Palace Yard and the Bridge were filled with soldiers; but if so, the men did not show themselves. In the course of the evening three or four companies of the Guards in St. James's Park did show themselves, and had some rough work to do, for many of the people took themselves away from Westminster by that route. The police, who were very numerous in Palace Yard, had a hard time of it all the afternoon, and it was said afterwards that it would have been much better to have allowed the petition to have been

brought up by the procession on Wednesday. A procession, let it be who it will that proceeds, has in it, of its own nature, something of order. But now there was no order. The petition, which was said to fill fifteen cabs,—though the absolute sheets of signatures were carried into the House by four men,—was being dragged about half the day, and it certainly would have been impossible for a member to have made his way into the House through Westminster Hall between the hours of four and six. To effect an entrance at all they were obliged to go round at the back of the Abbey, as all the space round St. Margaret's Church and Canning's monument were filled with the crowd. Parliament Street was quite impassable at five o'clock, and there was no traffic across the bridge from that hour till after eight. As the evening went on, the mob extended itself to Downing Street and the front of the Treasury Chambers, and before the night was over all the hoardings round the new Government offices had been pulled down. The windows also of certain obnoxious members of Parliament were broken, when those obnoxious members lived within reach. One gentleman who unfortunately held a house in Richmond Terrace, and who was said to have said that the ballot was the resort of cowards, fared very badly;—for his windows were not only broken, but his furniture and mirrors were destroyed by the stones that were thrown. Mr. Mildmay, I say, was much blamed. But after all, it may be a doubt whether the procession on Wednesday might not have ended worse. Mr. Turnbull was heard to say afterwards that the number of people collected would have been much greater.

Mr. Mildmay moved the second reading of his bill,

and made his speech. He made his speech with the knowledge that the Houses of Parliament were surrounded by a mob, and I think that the fact added to its efficacy. It certainly gave him an appropriate opportunity for a display which was not difficult. His voice faltered on two or three occasions, and faltered through real feeling; but this sort of feeling, though it be real, is at the command of orators on certain occasions, and does them yeoman's service. Mr. Mildmay was an old man, nearly worn out in the service of his country, who was known to have been true and honest, and to have loved his country well,—though there were of course they who declared that his hand had been too weak for power, and that his services had been naught;—and on this evening his virtues were remembered. Once when his voice failed him the whole House got up and cheered. The nature of a whig Prime Minister's speech on such an occasion will be understood by most of my readers without further indication. The bill itself had been read before, and it was understood that no objection would be made to the extent of the changes provided in it by the liberal side of the House. The opposition coming from liberal members was to be confined to the subject of the ballot. And even as yet it was not known whether Mr. Turnbull and his followers would vote against the second reading, or whether they would take what was given, and declare their intention of obtaining the remainder on a separate motion. The opposition of a large party of conservatives was a matter of certainty; but to this party Mr. Mildmay did not conceive himself bound to offer so large an amount of argument as he would have given had there been at the moment no crowd in

Palace Yard. And he probably felt that that crowd would assist him with his old tory enemies. When, in the last words of his speech, he declared that under no circumstances would he disfigure the close of his political career by voting for the ballot,—not though the people, on whose behalf he had been fighting battles all his life, should be there in any number to coerce him,—there came another round of applause from the Opposition benches, and Mr. Daubeny began to fear that some young horses in his team might get loose from their traces. With great dignity Mr. Daubeny had kept aloof from Mr. Turnbull and from Mr. Turnbull's tactics; but he was not the less alive to the fact that Mr. Turnbull, with his mob and his big petition, might be of considerable assistance to him in this present duel between himself and Mr. Mildmay. I think Mr. Daubeny was in the habit of looking at these contests as duels between himself and the leader on the other side of the House,—in which assistance from any quarter might be accepted if offered.

Mr. Mildmay's speech did not occupy much over an hour, and at half-past seven Mr. Turnbull got up to reply. It was presumed that he would do so, and not a member left his place, though that time of the day is an interesting time, and though Mr. Turnbull was accustomed to be long. There soon came to be but little ground for doubting what would be the nature of Mr. Turnbull's vote on the second reading. "How may I dare," said he, "to accept so small a measure of reform as this with such a message from the country as is now conveyed to me through the presence of fifty thousand of my countrymen, who are at this moment demanding their measure of reform just beyond the frail walls of

this chamber? The right honourable gentleman has told us that he will never be intimidated by a concourse of people. I do not know that there was any need that he should speak of intimidation. No one has accused the right honourable gentleman of political cowardice. But, as he has so said, I will follow in his footsteps. Neither will I be intimidated by the large majority which this House presented the other night against the wishes of the people. I will support no great measure of reform which does not include the ballot among its clauses." And so Mr. Turnbull threw down the gauntlet.

Mr. Turnbull spoke for two hours, and then the debate was adjourned till the Monday. The adjournment was moved by an independent member, who, as was known, would support the Government, and at once received Mr. Mildmay's assent. There was no great hurry with the bill, and it was felt that it would be well to let the ferment subside. Enough had been done for glory when Mr. Mildmay moved the second reading, and quite enough in the way of debate,—with such an audience almost within hearing,—when Mr. Turnbull's speech had been made. Then the House emptied itself at once. The elderly, cautious members made their exit through the peers' door. The younger men got out into the crowd through Westminster Hall, and were pushed about among the roughs for an hour or so. Phineas, who made his way through the Hall with Laurence Fitzgibbon, found Mr. Turnbull's carriage waiting at the entrance with a dozen policemen round it.

"I hope he won't get home to dinner before midnight," said Phineas.

"He understands all about it," said Laurence. "He had a good meal at three, before he left home, and you 'd find sandwiches and sherry in plenty if you were to search his carriage. He knows how to remedy the costs of mob popularity."

At that time poor Bunce was being hustled about in the crowd in the vicinity of Mr. Turnbull's carriage. Phineas and Fitzgibbon made their way out, and by degrees worked a passage for themselves into Parliament Street. Mr. Turnbull had been somewhat behind them in coming down the Hall, and had not been without a sense of enjoyment in the ovation which was being given to him. There can be no doubt that he was wrong in what he was doing. That affair of the carriage was altogether wrong, and did Mr. Turnbull much harm for many a day afterwards. When he got outside the door, where were the twelve policemen guarding his carriage, a great number of his admirers endeavoured to shake hands with him. Among them was the devoted Bunce. But the policemen seemed to think that Mr. Turnbull was to be guarded, even from the affection of his friends, and were as careful that he should be ushered into his carriage untouched, as though he had been the favourite object of political aversion for the moment. Mr. Turnbull himself, when he began to perceive that men were crowding close upon the gates, and to hear the noise, and to feel, as it were, the breath of the mob, stepped on quickly into his carriage. He said a word or two in a loud voice. "Thank you, my friends. I trust you may obtain all your just demands." But he did not pause to speak. Indeed, he could hardly have done so, as the policemen were manifestly in a hurry. The carriage was got

away at a snail's pace;—but there remained in the spot where the carriage had stood the makings of a very pretty street row.

Bunce had striven hard to shake hands with his hero,—Bunce and some other reformers as ardent and as decent as himself. The police were very determinate that there should be no such interruption to their programme for getting Mr. Turnbull off the scene. Mr. Bunce, who had his own ideas as to his right to shake hands with any gentleman at Westminster Hall who might choose to shake hands with him, became uneasy under the impediments that were placed in his way, and expressed himself warmly as to his civil rights. Now a London policeman in a political row is, I believe, the most forbearing of men. So long as he meets with no special political opposition, ordinary ill-usage does not even put him out of temper. He is paid for rough work among roughs, and takes his rubs gallantly. But he feels himself to be an instrument for the moment of despotic power as opposed to civil rights, and he won't stand what he calls "jaw." Trip up a policeman in such a scramble, and he will take it in good spirit; but mention the words "Habeas Corpus," and he 'll lock you up if he can. As a rule, his instincts are right; for the man who talks about "Habeas Corpus" in a political crowd will generally do more harm than can be effected by the tripping up of any constable. But these instincts may be the means of individual injustice. I think they were so when Mr. Bunce was arrested and kept a fast prisoner. His wife had shown her knowledge of his character when she declared that he 'd be "took" if any one was "took."

Bunce was taken into custody with some three or

four others like himself,—decent men, who meant no harm, but who thought that as men they were bound to show their political opinions, perhaps at the expense of a little martyrdom,—and was carried into a temporary stronghold, which had been provided for the necessities of the police, under the clock-tower.

"Keep me, at your peril!" said Bunce indignantly.

"We means it," said the sergeant who had him in custody.

"I 've done no ha'porth to break the law," said Bunce.

"You was breaking the law when you was upsetting my men, as I saw you," said the sergeant.

"I 've upset nobody," said Bunce.

"Very well," rejoined the sergeant; "you can say it all before the magistrate, to-morrow."

"And am I to be locked up all night?" said Bunce.

"I 'm afraid you will," replied the sergeant.

Bunce, who was not by nature a very talkative man, said no more; but he swore in his heart that there should be vengeance. Between eleven and twelve he was taken to the regular police-station, and from thence he was enabled to send word to his wife.

"Bunce has been taken," said she, with something of the tragic queen, and something also of the injured wife in the tone of her voice, as soon as Phineas let himself in with the latch-key between twelve and one. And then, mingled with, and at last dominant over, those severer tones, came the voice of the loving woman whose beloved one was in trouble. "I knew how it 'd be, Mr. Finn. Did n't I? And what must we do? I don't suppose he 'd had a bit to eat from the moment he went out;—and as for a drop of beer,

he never thinks of it, except what I puts down for him at his meals. Them nasty police always take the best. That 's why I was so afeared."

Phineas said all that he could to comfort her, and promised to go to the police-office early in the morning and look after Bunce. No serious evil would, he thought, probably come of it; but still Bunce had been wrong to go.

"But you might have been took yourself," argued Mrs. Bunce, "just as well as he." Then Phineas explained that he had gone forth in the execution of a public duty. "You might have been took, all the same," said Mrs. Bunce, "for I 'm sure Bunce did n't do nothing amiss."

END OF VOL. I.